THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE EXPERIENCE OF PARTNERS OF INCEST SURVIVORS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

BY

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "The Experience of Partners of Incest Survivors: A Phenomenological Study submitted by Kathryn Carey Fearnley in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Counseling Psychology.

John W Osborne
Supervisor

Rosemary Liburd

Date: Jan 23, 1989

This book is dedicated to
my husband and partner,

KENNETH PHILIP

Not only for years of friendship and support,
but also for unfailing good company
in the adventure of self-discovery
and the journey of healing.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the experience of men who are in committed relationships with women who are survivors of childhood incest. Three husbands and an ex-partner of incest survivors were interviewed for the study.

The participants (aged 27 to 35) were contacted through the good offices of The Family Service Association and the Sexual Assault Center, both of Edmonton. The unstructured data-gathering interview with each participant was audio-taped. The tapes were transcribed and analyzed phenomenologically according to procedures outlined by Colaizzi (1978) and Wertz (1984) in an attempt to describe commonalities in their experiences of the secondary repercussions of incest.

Common themes were clustered into higher order themes which reflected 1) varying degrees of alignment with a traditional masculine psychological stance of maintaining control, resisting emotional vulnerability and not seeking help, 2) confrontation with circumstances which defy control and challenge self-concept, 3) sharing aspects of the survivor's experience, 4) the partner's efforts to integrate the experience with his self-concept and expectations for his relationship. The partner's experience resembles that of the incest survivor.

Results were discussed in terms of Carl Jung's (1964) interpretation of *Beauty and the Beast*, and appropriate existential themes.

Findings strongly suggest supportive if not therapeutic intervention on behalf of the partner, both because of his trauma, and his potential for helping the survivor.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction and Literature Review

The Question

"Why shouldn't I trust him? He's been there all this time - through everything. But I still push him away."

"I know he would never hurt me. But sometimes I just can't let anyone touch me - not even him."

"I could probably make things bad enough that he would leave. Then I wouldn't have to worry about how he would feel if I wanted to die."

"It had simply never occurred to me, until that night when I saw it in his face, how hard this was for him."

I was working with a group of incest survivors, and this is the sort of comment the women would let drop. In the odd sentence here and there, while talking about their own struggles with learning to trust and building healthy notions of relationships, they revealed something of the reality of their partnerships. They also left the door open a crack on another world. What could life be like for the person on the other end of this "craziness"? Why would anyone stay where they were loved and needed one day and the next day they were rejected and punished and generally treated like a stand-in for a criminal?

What would the committed partner, married or otherwise, have to say about his life with an incest survivor?

I am interested in the general question of the experience of living with an incest survivor because, although I have never experienced physical incest, it is an issue which has touched my life. I honor the efforts of those who would heal it's hurtful legacy. I beg the indulgence of the reader in understanding that the explanation of my involvement will be limited to prevent taking liberties with the privacy and the dignity of others.

Background

The long-term effects experienced by survivors of an incestuous relationship have been documented by numerous researchers (Gordy, 1983; Herman, 1981; Lowery, 1987; Meiselman, 1978; Thorman, 1983). One of the most unrelenting of these results is difficulty in forming intimate relationships later in life, long past the end of the incestuous liaison. While there are a handful of studies looking at the experience of a partner of a rape victim (Burgess & Holstrom, 1979; Gurley, 1986; McEvoy & Brookings, 1984; Silverman, 1978) there are no published studies exploring the experience of a partner of an incest victim. The third person account of the behavior of partners and family members is described by incest survivors (Armstrong, 1978; Brady, 1979; Herman, 1981).

Bass and Davis (1988), Gil (1983), and Maltz & Holman (1987), devote valuable paragraphs to the expected reactions of or suggestions for partners.

Brunngraber (1986), suggests that supportive relationships are essential to the recovery of incest survivors. Given that incest seriously affects future relationships, the question arises as to the nature of the experience for the survivor's partner. This study would carry the focus further onto the partner's story. In working with incest survivors, it becomes apparent that often survivor and partner have no frame of reference for understanding each other's experience. It is all too easy for the survivor to project the pattern of her incestuous relationship onto her partner, and for him to accept it.

A great deal of information is available for those wishing to understand the nature of incest. It is important for the survivor who has a committed partner, who is usually expected to be her main support system, to have some information about his experience as well. Partners of survivors usually have precious few resources for education or support. An account of what other men have experienced, how they have felt and coped, would be useful to both members of the couple. What little information exists concerning the experience of partners suggests that it deviates significantly from the reaction of partners of rape survivors. Because the question under study is largely unexplored, a phenomenological investigation which seeks to describe the parameters of the experience of several co-researchers is appropriate.

Definition of Terms

While it is true that incest survivors and their partners can be of either sex, for purposes of this study these terms will be used as follows:

PARTNER: the male member of a long-term heterosexual relationship, not necessarily a formal marriage, who is not the former incest victim.

SURVIVOR: the female member of the relationship who is a former incest victim. The term "survivor" is used to convey faith in and respect for the struggles of those women who have decided not to be victims.

INCEST: Several writers have suggested that incest is a rather wide-spread pattern of family relationship which may or may not include sexual activity (Meiselman, 1978; Stein, 1973; Woodman, 1982, 1985; Wooley and Vigilanti, 1984). Masters and Johnson, in a 1973 popular magazine article, described the "favorite-daughter" syndrome, or pseudo-incest, as having long-term psychological effects equally potent as those of physical incest. The exploration of pseudo- or psychological incest is beyond the scope of this project. Any reference to incest, unless otherwise specified, will indicate physical incest. For our purposes, incest will be defined as any type of family interaction which results in any kind of sexual violation of children.

Introduction to Literature Review

The topic of incest is one of those said to be as old as humanity. Rist (1979) found that the subject of who may not marry whom, and for what reasons is part of virtually all cultures. While the various historical functions of the incest taboo have been copiously documented, its origin has never been satisfactorily explained.

The effects of Adam's relationship with his sister, or that of Cleopatra and her brother/uncle, or even of the more contemporary (pre-1892) Mormons are not available to us. Cultures have widened or narrowed the boundaries of incestuous relationships for purposes including economic survival, purity of royal bloodlines and religious reasons, and we have no way of knowing the impact upon the parties.

We do know that many of the historical injunctions against incest have been relaxed. It is no longer forbidden to marry one's 32nd cousin. The social (as opposed to legal) emphasis in modern day incest taboos has also changed from "who may marry whom" to "who may have sex with whom." We also know that adult women who were involved as children in incestuous relationships are suffering from it years later. Descriptions of the incestuous family and the experience of its members are readily available.

Evidence of the long-term effects of incest is found in the survivor's adult relationships. The focus of previous study has been on the survivor. There is very little information around the experience of the others involved in these relationships. The Literature Review will necessarily focus then, on a brief background of the phenomenon of incest from the perspective of the family interactions with which the future partner will be confronted, its long-term effects upon survivors and what is known about partners of incest survivors. Some theories of partner selection and male psychology will be included.

Overview of Incest

Definitions

Butler (1978), uses the term "incestuous assault" to refer to any "manual, oral or genital contact or other explicit sexual behavior that an adult family member imposes on a child, who is unable to alter or understand the adult's behavior because of his or her powerlessness in the family and early stage of psychological development" (pp. 4,5). The vast majority of reported cases involve a male adult perpetrator and a female child victim.

Justice & Justice (p. 27, 1979) broaden the concept to include "any act designed to stimulate a child sexually, or to use a child for sexual stimulation, either of the perpetrator or of another person."

The Phenomenon

This general description of the phenomenon of incest is a composite based on the writings of Brunngraber (1986), Butler (1978), Justice & Justice (1979), Meiselman (1978), Renvoize (1982), Stein (1973) and Thorman (1983).

Because underreporting makes statistics unreliable, the few numbers that have been used to outline the phenomenon are estimates.

Roughly one in four girls will be sexually molested before the end of adolescence. Estimates suggest that from 30% to 80% of these will be victims of relatives. The wide variation in these figures results from the fact that brother/sister incest is assumed to be far more common than father/daughter incest, but father/daughter incest is the most commonly treated. Molestation takes place in all social, economic, intellectual, geographic, occupational and age levels of our culture. A study of several hundred families over a six year period was unable to isolate a demographic profile of a typical incestuous family (Burgess, Holstrom, Groth & Sgroi, 1978). It is general consensus that the potentially incestuous situation has been developing for a number of years before overt sexual acts occur. The average disclosed incestuous relationship has been going on for about two years before it is discovered.

The Father

Depending on the theorist, the father/offender is presented as having varying degrees of responsibility in the incestuous dynamic. He may be represented as anything from a Freudian victim of oedipal circumstances (Justice & Justice, 1979) to the feminist author's designation as the driving force behind the entire dynamic (Butler, 1978). He has usually suffered from the physical or emotional absence of parent figures from an early age, and either does not understand or does not value the parent-child relationship. Whatever he may appear to be in the community, he tends to use intimidation and authority to delegate responsibility and retain control in the home. His own self-esteem is probably low and he is dependent on constant proof of caring from his family. His methods range from brutal to exquisitely subtle. He lacks impulse control, may or may not be alcoholic but in about half the cases he drinks before assaulting, and he focuses on sex as a means of meeting his needs for affection, approval and belonging. He is not usually psychotic or a danger to anyone outside the family. The term typically used to describe him is "endogamic" signifying an ingrown personality type. The family is virtually his sole source of social and sexual contact. He uses it to meet all his needs, and does not expect to be responsible for meeting anyone else's needs. As a major sculptor of his daughter's self-concept (Kestenbaum, 1983), he gives his daughter the message that she is worthy only to the extent that she satisfies and complies with him.

The Mother

Again depending upon the interpreter, mothers are pictured as everything from architects of the situation consciously sacrificing their daughters for their own ends, to helpless pawns, often themselves the confused product of socialization with their own history of sexual abuse. Whatever the reason for her circumstances, she is emotionally or physically not present for her daughter, and unable to protect her. Woodman (1985) considers this mother/daughter split a critical element underlying the incest wound and its healing. The mother often shares with the father/offender a deep feeling of inferiority and a lack of genuine mothering. She is probably quite intelligent, suffering from varying degrees of depression and is not perceived by the offender to be meeting his emotional or sexual needs.

The Daughter

The daughter has often, because of her mother's absence, been cast in the role of caretaker well before she has had a childhood. Depending on the nature of her parent's relationship, and of her father's seduction - it may be fairly subtle, romantic or intellectual - she may despise her mother for being weak or absent, and equate this weakness with being female. Often she enjoys caring for her father before the caring becomes eroticised. She may be convinced, bribed, threatened or physically forced *at any age* into sexual activities which continue for an average of seven years. The incest usually ceases only when the daughter leaves home. Whatever the circumstances, she soon becomes locked into the dilemma of having to be what she despises - helpless like her mother - in order to be acceptable. She learns as the abuse continues, that in order for herself, and perhaps her battered mother, or her younger, potentially abused sister to survive, she must be sacrificed. From long practice at anticipating what will satisfy the "other," she becomes skilled at being anything the situation requires, except herself. Later, she will try to fill this hole where her life should be with any number of "long term effects."

The daughter is usually normally intelligent and not exceptionally beautiful or sexually developed. She may have acquired some very adult behavior, and be forced to deal with issues that are not appropriate for her stage of development, at the same time, being held at a very immature level of growth. For instance, as a result of keeping the family secret, the amount of responsibility or degree of power she holds is disproportionate and damaging for a child. She may bear that responsibility and use that power. At the same time she may retain the child's perspective on that power or responsibility, feeling that she can cause whatever she wishes to happen, or everything that happens is because of something she did or didn't do. Her behavior may develop patterns which fall anyplace along a continuum from a clean-living super-achiever to a incorrigible, successfully suicidal delinquent.

Secrecy is a major ingredient in an incestuous arrangement, and in the long-term complications that follow. Thorman (1983) describes another aspect of the double-bind the daughter may find herself in - being responsible for the dissolution of the family if she tells and is believed, or suffering to varying degrees, the dissolution of her physical and emotional integrity if she does not tell, or is not believed.

The punishment, abandonment, rejection or family dissolution that may result from reporting the abuse are usually seen by the victim as being more horrendous than the abuse itself. Most victims therefore, reach adulthood without ever having disclosed their secret. They carry into their adult lives tangled perceptions of themselves, of the nature of relationships with men and women and of parenting, as well as the often debilitating survival mechanisms (physical and psychic self-mutilation, substance dependence, unrealistic expectations for performance, dissociative states) which allowed them to outlast the abuse.

Long-Term Effects

No single situation or personality characteristic causes incest. Brunngraber (1986) and Meiselman (1978) state that it is impossible to prove cause and effect between incestuous activities and type or degree of later symptoms. Impact of various circumstances is highly subjective. The range of behaviors exhibited by incest survivors makes it difficult to identify probable outcomes. There are however, such a high percentage of incest survivors represented among certain groups, such as prostitutes and runaways, that a connection cannot be dismissed.

Rist (1979) sees the effects of incest as impacting on the survivor mainly in adolescence. She suggests that the most serious outcomes are sexual promiscuity and orgasmic dysfunction. She is supported by numerous other researchers in her assessment of outcomes, but not necessarily in her timing of impact. Results of investigation into long-term effects suggest that repercussions are life long. Brunngraber (1986), Gordy (1983), Justice & Justice (1979), Meiselman (1978), Renvoize (1982) and Thorman (1983), cite self-concept, future intimate relationships, sexuality and substance abuse as major problem areas for incest survivors in adulthood. Lowery (1987) emphasizes suicidal and depressive tendencies. Wooley and Vigilanti (1984) cite the inability to individuate and separate from the family of origin. The possibility exists of survivors becoming perpetrators with their own children, although this rarely happens with female survivors.

Survivors are often haunted by nightmares or flashbacks triggered by the most innocent of stimuli. Memories of abusive incidents may also be totally repressed, but the shame, profound rage and guilt associated with them linger for years. These seemingly unexplained emotions along with the absence of basic trust and lack of sense of self are the basis for much of the lingering suicidal and depressive tendencies seen in survivors.

Lowery (1987) suggests that the survivor can become reinvolved in incestuous activity or manifestations arising from childhood assault can become chronic. The incidence of primary and secondary non-orgasmic dysfunction is higher in incest than rape survivors (Becker, Skinner, Abel & Treacy, 1982).

Because she may have repressed specific memories, the manifestations for which she is seeking treatment are seldom recognized as symptoms of a deeper problem. The depression, substance abuse or other disorders are therefore unresponsive to treatment.

One of the most pernicious and enduring long-term results of incestuous relationships is the survivor's belief that ultimately, the fact that the abuse took place at all was her fault. This misconception may be present to some degree in all victims. The survivor may feel guilty for using her compliance to gain favors, or she may feel she should have somehow been able to stop the abuse since she knew it was wrong. Most subject to this exaggerated sense of responsibility are those survivors whose compliance was achieved with easy words rather than any degree of force or anger (Becker et al, 1982). These survivors feel more than others that they must have colluded with the abuse because they do not appreciate the "force" implied in the adult/child relationship.

Partners

First person accounts of the survivors' relationships later in life are included in vignettes of case studies by many of the above authors. Brady (1979) goes into some detail describing her failed marriage and her ex-husband's reaction to her incest related patterns. Reaction patterns of partners are also described in a study dealing with marital therapy in which collusive denial of incest is an issue (Ingram, 1985). While there is a contract to play certain roles for each other, the survivor's undeveloped capacity for intimate relationships can leave the partner feeling rejected sexually as well as shattered when the incest is revealed.

Gil (1983) suggests that partners may become inadvertent rescuers or punishers. They may want to over-protect or compensate the survivor for all she has suffered, effectively keeping her in a victim position. They may also be confused by the survivor's experimenting with roles for which she has never had positive models. Depending upon when the incest is revealed, partners may also be confronted with relating either to a potential in-law who is known to be an offender, or a member of the family who has suddenly been cast in the role of daughter-raper.

Bass and Davis (1988) devote a valuable chapter to the partner, validating the experience of feeling inadequate for the task of helping the survivor, resentful at the amount of focus on her and her problems, and excitement at being in a vital and developing partnership. They translate the survivor's experience for the partner and explore the partner's possible reactions. Realistic suggestions for what to expect and how to go about supporting both the survivor and the partner are included.

Maltz and Holman (1987) focus the understanding of the partner's experience on the effects on sexuality. They address what survivors and their partners find helpful or unhelpful in each other, and what survivors find desirable in partners. Some of the information is first-hand accounts from partners. The psychologist facilitator of the support group attended by two of the co-researchers commented on the lack of information available on the topic of partners. For the support group, he depended on material dealing with couples' relationships and abusive patterns.

Theories of Mate Selection

How do men get involved with women who have a history of incestuous assault? Aside from the roughly one-in-ten odds of selecting an incest survivor from the general public, is the question of what it is about these individuals that connected them with these women?

The literature on theories of marital selection tends to be a collection of disparate ideas which fall into three main categories: descriptions of who has selected whom, the circumstances under which selection takes place, and why. They tend to agree only on the fact that there is no single explanation for mate selection, and that the existing options are not logical.

Cognitive and Behavioral Theories

Cognitive and behavioral formulations are predominant at least in part because they are easier to research. Berscheid and Walster (1969), Byrne (1971), Cassell and Nesselrode (1967) and Murstein (1976) make extensive use of experimentation to support varying hypothesis of interpersonal attraction. Byrne (1971) posits a theory of attitudinal similarity as a basis for attraction. Attitudinal agreement or "likeness" seems to be a good predictor of who will like whom after a period of acquaintanceship, but does not explain initial attraction.

Murstein (1976) surveys a number of classical approaches including choice by logical sorting of complimentary qualities, similarity of values and goals, physical attractiveness, Oedipal relationships, needs fulfillment and others. Comments on research accompanying each section are included. "Who marries whom" is well explored, but "why" is not.

Barnard and Corrales (1979) and Hatfield and Sprecher (1986) attempt to answer the "why" question from similar perspectives. Their treatment of the question tends to blur into the edges of psychodynamics. Barnard and Corrales are family therapists who posit a systems approach to selection based on motivation to belong, to be accepted and affirmed. Hatfield and Sprecher explore the impact of appearance on all aspects of life, and suggest that if one is attracted by physical attributes, one assumes that inner qualities are equally acceptable. They suggest that one reason why appearance is such a powerful attractor is that one hopes to become more physically attractive by association. Attribution theory (one gets what one deserves) as well as similarity and complimentarity are explored in this light.

Berscheid and Walster (1969) echo a pattern found in most references to theories of attraction - they refer to some aspect of "the eye of the beholder" as being in the end, as crucial as what is beheld - and then focus strictly on the beheld. As was mentioned previously, this is very likely due to the fact that it is extremely difficult to obtain hard data on what is going on in the eye of the beholder. Apologies implied, they present a succinct, comprehensive social scientist's handbook to the research on interpersonal attraction.

Psychodynamic Theories

As presented in research surveys, psychodynamic theories based on Freud's Oedipal connection lack support mainly because "no testing of a vaguely formulated theory can be more than suggestive" (Murstein, 1976, p. 34). With such sentiment he is more or less dismissed.

Hatfield and Sprecher (1986) state that the first best attractor is aesthetics. The layer beneath that one is explicated by Klimek (1979) who states that "the energy for human mate selection originates in sexuality" (p.5). At this point however, Klimek separates from Freud's concept of sexuality as being the expression of repressed libido, and moves toward a broader and more positive use of the word as representing heart or soul energy. Klimek states that we tend to see our attraction to others in terms of the qualities of others, but that it is actually our psychological makeup which responds to certain cues. Enter yet another theory which has even less documentation, but makes an even more intriguing fit with the question - Jung's theory of complimentary sexual elements within the personality. A man's personality will have a complimentary feminine element called an *anima*. The corresponding masculine element in a woman is the *animus*. Jung referred to the *anima* and *animus* as archetypes - emotional themes or patterns canalized in human beings, much like the tendency to walk upright and speak, and subject to the same individual variations.

An example from Stein (1973, p.xiii) will give a rudimentary but clear demonstration of how this construct operates.

> ...the bill of the herring gull is yellow, with a red spot at the end of the lower mandible. Using cardboard dummies in natural colors, Tinberger found that the red spot was the essential stimulus for releasing the feeding instinct in the baby gull. The gull had little or no response to a dummy lacking the red patch.
>
> Such findings indicate that an instinctual response is dependent on the release of internal images innate to the perceptual system of the organism. These findings indicate also that the instinctual response is far more complex than a simple biological reflex. Jung's concept of the archetype as an inherited, pre-existing psychic disposition is supported by such experiments.

Byrne (1971) suggests that the survival of folk sayings is in direct proportion to their accuracy. The above example from natural history lends weight and gives some insight into "the eye of the beholder."

The human equivalent of the mechanism for perceiving the red spot in the eye of the baby herring gull, when we are attempting to understand interpersonal attraction, seems best represented by Jung's complimentary sexual elements.

Cappon (1981), Gughenbuhl-Craig (1977), Johnson (1983), Jung (1964), Sanford (1980) and Stein (1973) discuss the function of the *anima* and *animus* in heterosexual coupling. The folk saying "opposites attract" is the distilled common experience of the psychological imperative to completeness within the individual. The *anima* is defined as a man's soul. Aspects of ourselves of which we are unaware, we tend to project onto the specific other who activates that unconscious part. Men unconsciously search for their unlived feminine side, their soul, in women. A compilation of archetype and the specific collection of one man's experiences of women, will shape the image of his *anima*. "That's the one for me!" is the reaction of a man who has seen the woman who reflects his anima. Jung (1964, p.191) wrote of the woman who is "fascinatingly vague...vulnerable yet mysterious" to which men can attribute almost anything - they attract anima projections. Women who have been incest victims become unconscious experts at intuiting and becoming what is required of them. Their personal right to be has been in such question that they themselves simply aren't there. They have an enormous secret. They are terribly vulnerable. All these effects can combine to make survivors fascinating and mysterious.

In summary, literature dealing with theories of interpersonal attraction seems to fall into a continuum. Psychodynamic writing posits a motivation toward wholeness and union in general. The *anima* in a man is his predisposition to union with a particular type of woman representing his internal opposite. Theories proposing attraction based on likeness, proximity, complimentarity, similarity, rewards provided by others, attribution theory and so on, are documenting the process and success of the search for the perfect fit with an internal image.

Masculine Psychology

Jung's theory of internal complimentary sexual elements within the personality is the only one which can be said to refer to masculine psychology. The differentiation of perspective on the basis of gender is one of his hallmarks. Other thinkers (Leibert & Wicks-Nelson, 1981 Minton & Schneider, 1980; Thomas, 1985) have explored the possibility of differences in functioning under the heading of "sex differences." The basis for their differential hypothesis has been either genetics or socialization. Although Adler discriminated a "tendency to passivity" from a "protest to be superior," Monte suggests that he "succumbed to the historical moment" in labeling the phenomena feminine and masculine (1980, p. 326). Perhaps in reaction to the women's movement has been an examination by many men of the lived-experience of being male in our society. Goldberg (1976), Osherson (1986) and Silverberg (1986), repeat the same message about the experience of many men - because they are not culturally allowed to be seen as feeling, fearful or dependent, they might enjoy the privilege of power and accomplishment, but they are also yoked to it's inescapable weight and sterility.

Monick (1987) describes the essence of masculinity as the ability "to return to life, time and again, after defeat and death" (p. 16). The need to be seen as masculine demands repression of what are often felt to be feminine and therefore compromising aspects of the personality. The repression is expressed in a more or less rigid control over the irrational, the environment, and certainly those others over which one has culturally sanctioned role superiority. Young-Eisendrath (1984) suggests in her writing on conflict in marriage that it is the function of the second half of man's life, when he has reached the peak of his empire building in the world, to develop a relationship with his neglected inner world, and its inherent vulnerability, represented by his *anima*.

Summary

The long-term impact on the survivor of an incestuous relationship is felt in virtually all areas of life. Self-concept, parenting, performance expectations, sexuality, object relations and human relationships are influenced. Survivors often relive or attempt to heal their abusive past in the context of adult partnerships. There is a significant other implied in this statement. While research indicates that this significant other can be crucial to the survivor's healing, there is scant information dealing with the relationship from his perspective. Literature suggests that the partner has focused on the survivor, as "the problem," and attempted to support her. The reality of the experience for him has not been explored.

By way of laying some foundation for the partner's experience, the preceding literature review has given an overview of the interpersonal dynamics often found in the survivor's family of origin. Because the long-term effects of incest usually affect adult relationships, the partner will be drawn into these patterns. Because the survivor is often in such great need of support, there is often little or no energy left in the relationship for recognizing, much less dealing with, the needs of the partner.

Some brief glances at theories attempting to explain the mechanisms of interpersonal attraction reveal that there are many qualities exhibited by successful couples, various descriptions of the coupling process, and a few ideas as to the motivation for the process. Psychodynamic theory of interpersonal attraction suggests that individuals are drawn to each other based on archetypal cues. Masculine psychology in terms of present day cultural roles allows little room for vulnerability in men, and demands they be in control. A needy partner gives a man the setting for being "the strong one," as well as providing, through his wounded spouse, an avenue of expression for his own neglected wounds. These ideas are explored with an eye to providing context for an analysis of the lived-experience of a particular type of relationship.

The purpose of this study is to focus on the virtually unexplored and certainly undocumented area of the partner's experience in a committed relationship with an incest survivor. Both the literature and conversations with a dozen or so local therapists indicates that there are many of these couples coming for help. Treatment thus far has focused heavily on the incest survivor. Incest is after all, the story of a relationship. The survivor has entered into an adult relationship with the ostensible purpose of attempting to heal that part of her life. Presumably, it is the relationship as a whole must then be healed. It is the aim of this investigation to allow the other person in that relationship to be more present to that process. Due to the exploratory nature of the question, a phenomenological approach, which uses description to reveal the meaning of a lived-experience, is appropriate for this study.

CHAPTER II

Philosophical Foundations of the Phenomenological Method

Introduction

Psychological phenomena have been investigated by the experimental method for the past century. The examination of measurable objects by methods designed to prove causal relationships by observable, repeatable results, with the utmost independence from the examiner, has been the natural scientific ideal (Colaizzi, 1978). This pattern of research has been applied not only to physical phenomena in the natural world but to the realm of human behavior. Luijpen and Koren (1986) state that the very objectivity required to insure dependable informaton in the natural world eliminates that element of experience which is most necessary for a genuine understanding of human behavior.

The phenomenological approach intends to understand rather than define human behavior (Jennings, 1986). By use of description and interpretation, the method gives insight into lived events. Luijpen and Koren (1969) describe phenomenology as an attempt to remove the obstacles to personal understanding of answers to personal questions.

Philosophical Differences: Natural and Human Science

Colaizzi (1978), Giorgi (1970, 1979), Luijpen and Koren (1969), Valle & King, (1978) and Van Kaam (1966) explore the distinction in these two approaches.

Natural Science

The philosophical bases underlying the human and natural approaches to psychology are rooted in their different conceptions of the nature of human beings. Rene Descartes (1596 - 1650), in his attempt to know what is real, ultimatly eliminated everything but his thoughts, which he took to be impressions of objects or events, and the objects or events themselves. His analysis of his discovery resulted in his declaring a separation of the mind from the body, subject from object. Experiments conducted in the first psychology laboratory in the late 1880's were conducted on the basis of the Lockean theory which holds that the human's thought process is simply the rearranging of those impressions which the outside world of things and events applies to our neutral, empty receiving mechanism (Rychlak, 1973), much as warm wax receives a stamp. The measuring of these stamps, or physical phenomena, and the inherent emphasis on the material, objective world, thus became the focus of natural science.

The principles of experimental science are held to be legitimate for investigating any question. Psychology as a natural science focuses on observable behaviors of humans. Subtle and seemingly irrational examples of human behavior, or cognitive behaviors such as learning, decision making and judgement formation, are regarded as unexplained extensions of the same laws of cause and effect which apply to the rest of the natural world.

The data resulting from the physiological experiments and psychometric instruments used for exploring and interpreting these behaviors, reinforce the basic belief that these operations are ultimately the predictable, controllable results of a definable system of cause and effect. In order to make the tool fit the task however, it is necessary for experimental psychology to reduce some of the very behaviors which make a being human, (i.e. humor, imagination, introspection, reasoning) to the same material level as other "objects" (e.g. the structure, chemistry and functioning of the physical brain).

Realism vs. Idealism

Followers of Descartes' theory became known as *realists*. Returning to our analogy of warm wax, psychological *realists* speak in terms of constructs which are the patterns left in the wax (in the mind) by the ultimate fixed reality of the external stamp.

Idealism, the name given to a collection of ideas arising in reaction to materialism, holds in general the view that ultimate reality is in terms of *meaning*. "Warm wax" was held to have a character of its own - consciousness - which contributes something of its own to the received impression. The "something" combined with the received impression, is the meaning or the reality of the thing or event. Consciousness is held to be the source of ideas and introspection. (Descartes considered them to be inspiration from god. Rychlak, 1977). Schools of thought emphasising either the perceiver or the perceived, consciousness or its object - far from being very different philosophies, are more like two sides of the same coin. Both philosophies create a separation between subject and object, attempting to fix life down with pins like a bug in a shadow box. The belief that man can be separated into two parts, body and mind, is the underlying basis of natural science, and the point of departure for human scientists. The human science tradition has maintained that the object and its meaning to the experiencer create an inseparable reality.

Emphasis on either the object (materialism) or the subject (idealism) results in a negation of the significance of the unity of context and the person. The lack of a contextual or meaning connection between the subjective and objective reduces man to just another item among many in the "natural" world to be classified.

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Human Science

Psychology, as a human science, rejects the "Cartesian split" between mind and body and questions the premise that we are either "blank slates," merely the accumulated results of separate external events, or the other side of that coin, isolated consciousness in a world of illusion. Kant (1704-1804) was of the belief that there was knowledge to be gained that could only be derived from dialogue between man and his world (Rychlak, 1973). Human science focuses on that dialogue and the meaning of the implied relationship between individuals and their worlds.

Giorgi (1986) holds that the two methods have the potential for furthering each others' goals. He describes a "context of discovery" and a "context of justification" each of which serve different but not necessarily exclusive masters.

The "context of discovery" seeks to explore the nature of lived-experience with the intention of understanding the underlying dynamics. The products of this exploration may then be used in various ways - for the solution of problems, the understanding of an event, or as the basis for experimental study.

The "context of justification" seeks to prove the validity of such an application. Shapiro (1986) suggests that it not necessary to choose either of the two approaches. He proposes that we reserve the application of logical validity to questions of a mathematical nature, and use understanding, or the sense of whether or not an explanation fits the experience, as an equally valid basis for knowledge of a different sort.

Phenomenological Psychology

Phenomenology was developed by Edmund Husserl (1859 - 1938), and combined with existential philosophy in order to "allow us to contact phenomena as we actually live them out and experience them" (Valle & King, 1978). Giorgi (1970) suggests several basic antecedents to psychology as a human science. A presupposition that a human being is not just another object is basic to a phenomenological approach. Another presupposition is the validity of meaning, or the interpretation attached by human beings, to aspects of their worlds, which creates experiences unique to humans. Finally, phenomenology places primary emphasis on the relationship between people and their worlds - a quality of being engaged which gives existence and definition to all aspects of an encounter.

Phenomenology as a science demands that the perspective of the researcher, or her particular relationship to a question, be explicitly stated or "bracketed". Bracketing is the acknowledging of a perspective or bias on the basis of which the investigator is involved in and interpreting the data. For instance, if the data gathered from partners of incest survivors were being investigated for perhaps developmental or psychopathological application, the interpretation would necessarily be focused on those aspects of the experience. Bracketing will be discussed further in the discussion of methods in Chapter Three. The above presuppositions underly the following aspects of psychology as a human science.

Co-constitutionality

Basic to psychology as a human science is the premise of consciousness-within-a-context or a relationship between people and their environments. Individuals are not objects *in* the world, but *of* it. Human experience in its relative context "co-constitutes" a unity of subject and object in which each is totally dependent for existence upon the other (Valle & King, 1978). Smith (1979) uses an example from psychotherapy - a therapist and his or her attitude, the client and his or her issues, are part of each other's context. Within that context they define each other.

Intentionality

Incest has historically been considered taboo. That act of "considering" is a *consciousness-of* connection between subject and object which demonstrates an "intentionality" in the human approach to a situation. Human consciousness always has an object.

We are always in relationship with, conscious of, something, even if it be just(?) our own consciousness. The reality of the moment then, is the nature of the relationship we are having with our environment at any given time.

Fidelity to Lived-Experience

Natural science studies the individual instance only from the standpoint of how it relates to a norm. Human science values the nature of the experience itself. Luijpen and Koren (1969) describe *experiencing* as placing oneself in relationship to something, assuming an attitude toward it and allowing oneself to be affected by it. What is experienced then becomes "reality" for that person. Phenomenological psychology seeks to explore the essential structure of an experience, the nature of spontaneous way of being in the world, prior to any explanation or interpretion. This is a primary, natural level of experience as described by Van Kaam (1966). He goes on to differentiate a second, organized, scientific level of experience based on the primary experience. The goal of the second level will be the exposure of the essential nature of the experience.

Generalizability

Smith and Glass (1987) describe the external validity of a statistical study in terms of whether or not its results can be applied accurately to large groups of subjects outside of those used in the study itself. Human science would use the presence of a common understanding of the essential nature of an experience as evidence of generalizability. When Becker et al (1982) administered the Sexual Arousal Inventory to rape and incest survivors with the intention of studying types of sexual dysfunction, their results would be generalized on the basis of similar test scores or a factual result. The phenomenological approach determines generalizability on the basis of empathetic understanding. Sameness of meaning rather than sameness of factuality is the criterion. The common assent to the veracity or "fit" of a description would not replace logical statistical validity, but would be more appropriate in validating questions of experience prior to experimental explanation of its components.

Validity

Validity in phenomenological research is a question of "the relationship of the researcher to the truth" (Wertz, 1984, p. 29). Once the validity of the question is determined (by the researcher's interest in a lived human situation) the researcher's relationship to the truth, at least as represented by her interpretation of the data, can be assessed in several ways.

Giorgi (1975) suggests that even if her reader disagrees with her interpretation, having at hand the "bracketed" pre-suppositions and an explanation of her method, the reader is able to understand how the interpretation was reached. "Bracketing," or the stating of biases allows their influences to be seen and sets the limits for validity of results (Wertz, 1975).

Re-spiralling, or returning to the co-researchers to check the accuracy of the description of the lived-experience is an on-going validity check during the data-gathering process itself (Packer, 1985).

Salner (1986, p. 121) has said that "all human knowledge is derived from the process of intrepretation." Presenting the interpetation, then, in language which accurately conveys the meaning of the phenomenon, or using convincing argument, is a method of checking its validity.

Finally, the "fit" between the phenomenon and its description, as ascribed to by the experiencer, constitutes validity if it is empirically (experientially) accurate, whether or not it follows rules of logic (Shapiro, 1986). Individuals not interviewed for this study, for instance, should be able to relate to the results of the analysis if they are partners of incest survivors. This concurrence with the description would underscore its validity.

Reliability

The extent to which traditional concepts of reliability achieve their purpose of being rigidly consistent, is often the extent to which their results are unrelated to everyday life (Wertz, 1986). Scientific measurement applied to the attributes of an object - "Five foot two, eyes of blue" - is concise but tells us little about the nature of "my gal." The nature of reliability in phenomenological research then, depends on the nature of the question. To think of reliability only in terms of stable measurement is to answer the question "how much." Reliability in terms of accurately conveying the meaning of an event presupposes the researcher's valid conception of the event, and as such is "intrinsically context bound" (Wertz, 1986).

Reliability is seen then to wear different coats, as was validity, according to the relationship between the object or event and the nature of our question. There can be little debate as to how tall "my gal" is, once we agree on the accuracy of the yardstick. Whether or not she "could woo" is a matter of perspective which can be generally ascribed to or not, but can never be proven. The reliability of that perspective depends largely on how generally it inspires agreement.

The phenomenological approach to reliability then is to cull from the individual approaches to an experience, the common underlying structure. It is the researcher's task to assemble the individual perspectives in such a way as to show the essential elements of the experience, in a meaningful form recognizable to anyone who has had the same experience.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Introduction

The previous chapter described the different philosophical bases underlying the exploratory and the explanatory approaches to the scientific study of people and their environments. A major question to emerge from the dialogue between human and natural scientists is that of the ability of the experimental method, derived from the natural science perspective, to do justice to the study of human psychological phenomena as perceived by the experiencer.

Colaizzi (1978), Giorgi (1975, 1985), Polkinghorne (1979), Van Kaam (1966) and Wertz (1984) discuss the development and application of methods suited to that task. Partly due to the nature of the questions it asks, phenomenological research is not conducted according to "a" method. Phenomenological inquiry is an approach which allows the researcher to be flexible in developing procedures which best explicate the structures which are necessary and sufficient for illuminating the selected phenomenon (Wertz, 1984). Natural science psychologists use the context of verification for testing a priori hypothesis about causal connections between events. This search for causal relationships, for explanation and definition of observed phenomenon, and for criteria for true knowledge (Giorgi, 1986) is based on the assumption that the object under study is directly or indirectly measurable. When the question is more open-ended, as is the case with lived-experience such as Stevick's (1971) investigation of the experience of anger, an exploratory method is appropriate.

Rationale

The phenomenon under study in this paper, the experience of being in a long-term, committed relationship with an incest survivor, is virtually unexplored. Second and third hand references to the experiences of partners of incest survivors can be found, along with the occasional short quotation from a partner. The committed partner is a resource for healing as well as a secondary victim of his spouse's offender. In order to expand our knowledge of the after-effects of incest and use that knowledge most effectively, the researcher must first have as clear an idea as possible of the dynamics of the event under consideration. Wertz (1984) states that before operational definitions can be accurately applied to variables in an experimental situation, there must first be a valid foreunderstanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The valid foreunderstanding includes the essential elements of the phenomenon, as well as a statement of what the phenomenon is not. The describing of the valid foreunderstanding is the province of phenomenology.

Phenomenologists refer to the necessity for "faithfulness to the things as they appear" (Van Kaam, 1966, p. 321). This faithfulness is expressed methodologically "by mapping personal experience through careful description (which) can create the opportunity for the phenomenal structures of human experience to present themselves" (Osborne, 1985, p. 200). The phenomenological method including interpretation of the structure as described by the participants is appropriate for attempting to understand their lived-experiences.

Bracketing

The question of "approach" or existing presuppositions is critical to the validity of any scientific study. Even more so this is true of a phenomenological approach because phenomenologists are thought to be breaking from the traditional presuppositions of neutrality, control and the separation of subject and object. Colaizzi (1978, p. 55) describes the necessity for phenomenologists to be explicitly aware of the "content-method-approach unity" in acknowledging that the question under study and the chosen method of examination are direct results of the researcher's approach. If the researcher is to be true to the things themselves, she must be as acutely aware as possible of the pre-suppositions, or the color of the lens, through which she views the phenomenon in question. Colaizzi (1978) suggests answering the following questions in order to bring to mind the presuppositions or prejudices the researcher might bring to her study:

Why am I involved - in the experience of partners of incest survivors?

I must make it very clear that I have never experienced physical incest. That declaration is necessary to prevent false implication of my parents. Equally clear, however, is the fact that I, and many women like me, carry psychological stigmata and relationship patterns which are identical to that of classical incest victims. The question here is not how this happens, but how it is experienced by her partner.

Severe depression and suicidal tendencies following a history of abusive relationships brought me into therapy a number of years ago. In the course of that work I learned that as a child I had begun a pattern of denying, to a profound degree, my own being in return for a hoped-for promise of acceptance. It was a classic double-bind: be who you are and you are invisible, be someone else and *you* are still invisible. Eventually I even forgot that I had become invisible.

The success in the therapeutic relationship of my efforts to reclaim my right to walk on the earth as *me* seemed to be paralleled by the development of a genuine, committed partnership with a loving and supportive spouse.

Just as I was beginning to feel that I might be finally coming "out of the woods" I was involved with an event which triggered an intense relapse into former patterns. I experienced a feeling of being stuck in a space somewhere between worlds of the living and the dead. I believed that the rest of my family would be better off if I were not there to make their lives so difficult. I was acutely ashamed of being in such a debilitated state. I was in a blistering rage at myself for having "learned nothing and gotten nowhere" in the years of struggling to heal myself. At the same time, I had battled with the lure of suicide since teenage and was of the firm conviction that suicide was not really a "way out", and if I really believed in the possibility of healing, it simply was not an option.

Central to my sense of loss was the profound belief that what I was experiencing was important to others only in that it was a tiresome nuisance.

Perhaps I had just never been capable of recognizing it before, but in one of those particular moments of grace that seem to open to me now and then, I saw something in my husband's face which left no doubt about the nature of the enormous impact my experience was having on him.

I registered the significance of that impact and put it carefully away while I spent a few more weeks regaining my own balance.

Even though the issue behind my "backsliding" had to be resolved by me alone, I believe it was significant to my recovery to experience, perhaps for the first time, that my well-being was connected to someone else on an almost purely existential level.

And then came the question of what that experience - of being so intimately connected to my inner state - must be for him, and for others like him.

Focusing on partners of women who suffer the effects of "psychological" incest would necessitate partners first identifying that construct. For purposes of this study I invited partners of physical incest survivors to participate because it would be easier for them to identify and articulate "incest" and the impact it had on them.

How is it that I come to study this question?

Relationships have always played a significant part in my learning. Whether it was personal, educational or work related, I have long seen relationships to be carriers of messages for me. I am disposed to respect the vehicle of relationship then, and notice its characteristics in different situations.

For the past several years I have been involved, off and on, in counseling incest survivors. I often noticed parallels between our experiences around the issue of partnership.

Experiencing my partners' involvement in my healing process made it imperative for me to learn more about how he was affected by this part of my life.

I felt a need to formally recognize the fact that my struggle is more than just "my struggle", and to broaden my concept of "my healing" to include my relationships and those who share them with me.

What preconceptions and assumptions do I bring to my exploration of this question?

These ideas describe a perspective from which I find myself interacting with my world.

- Relationships are, among other things, vehicles which can help me become more aware of myself.
- My outer relationships are a reflection of my inner dynamics.
- Because I believe I have experienced it, I ascribe to the theory that the psyche contains a complementary sexual element: the *anima*, or feminine aspect in men, and the *animus* or masculine element in women.
- This complimentary sexual element has been instrumental in my selection of partners.
- In general, couples have deliberately, but perhaps not consciously, selected each other for his or her fit with the interior man or woman, and with the (probably also unconscious) intention of balancing that inner relationship.

- The survivor and her partner are probably ideally suited to facilitate each others' healing process.
- I believe that ultimately there is a purpose to life's experiences.
- That purpose is to make me more conscious and thereby give me more creative choice in my life.
- I can choose whether or not, and when, to learn from my experiences.
- In regard to this study in particular, I am aware of a supportive attitude toward the co-researchers which, no doubt, sponsors a sympathetic interpretation of the data.

The making explicit or bracketing of these assumptions will allow a greater degree of freedom for the data to speak for themselves, facilitating a clearer understanding of the phenomenon as it is presented by the participants. Having a clear explication of the researcher's bias will also provide the reader with a framework from which to assess the validity of the data (Wertz, 1985).

Co-researchers

The term "co-researcher" is preferable to that of "subject" in a research paradigm which posits a relationship of co-constituency among those involved in the process of discovery. The researcher enters and affects the experiencer's world and vice versa. Together they explore the question. Becker (1986) and Van Kaam (1966) write that selection of co-researchers or participants should be based on the depth of their experience with the phenomenon in question, their ability to express that experience and willingness to explore that experience with the researcher. Sampling theory is not a basis for selection of participants since we are not intending to satisfy criteria for statistical generalization, but to understand a human experience (Polkinghorne, 1979). These authors also agree that the number of participants can vary widely depending on the nature of the study. A variety of perspectives on the experience which can be pieced together by the researcher for a more complete picture of the event is optimal.

Co-researchers in this study will be referred to by fictitious names. The men in this study were located in a variety of places. David and Michael had been in support groups for partners of incest survivors. Robert was in therapy at the time with his wife. These three were selected after a screening of client lists by their present or former therapists. The fourth participant, Greg, is the partner of an acquaintance who had been in a therapy group herself.

The nature of the project was explained by the therapist and/or by a letter from the author. If the gentleman agreed to participate he was referred for the study with the understanding that he could withdraw at any time. Ultimately, the co-researchers selected themselves, since the willingness to speak about a very intimate and painful aspect of their lives was a limiting factor. It was ascertained that all of the gentlemen had access to counseling should the need arise.

All of the men are in their late twenties or early thirties. Two are married - Michael very recently and Robert, for about ten years. David is no longer in a relationship with the incest survivor. Greg has been living with the survivor for several years. All of the relationships are or were of at least three years duration. The participants' occupations are in keeping with their educational levels which include high school, trade school and university. Two of the relationships include children. None of the men were known to me prior to their agreeing to be interviewed.

Materials

Data is in the form of transcripts of audio-taped conversations with the participants. A portable cassette recorder was used to provide a verbatim transcript of the co-researcher's description of his experience. Notes from a subsequent telephone conversation were incorporated into one protocol.

A working copy of the analysis was submitted to each of the co-researchers for comment or correction and these remarks have been incorporated into the finished analysis.

Procedure

The study evolved through the following steps:

1. Approximately thirty therapists, agencies and organizations who were most likely to be treating couples or individuals with issues involving incestuous assault were contacted with the request for assistance in locating individuals who a) would be in a long-term, committed relationship with an incest survivor, and b) would be willing to talk to me about their experience.

2. Even though several of those contacted expected to be able to locate clients who were suitable in terms of stage of therapy and ability to articulate, in the end only these four (from two agencies) were willing to come forward and speak about their experience.

At one of those agencies I was already known personally to some of the staff. At the other I was asked to present my thesis proposal in person and be available to answer questions prior to their decision to survey client lists.

3. I was given the phone numbers of those who were interested in participating. The initial contact actually became an introductory interview serving to establish rapport on the basis of voice contact while discussing the nature of the project and arrangements for meeting. Three of the men preferred to meet at their homes, sensing they would be better able to talk in safe and familiar surroundings. The fourth preferred to meet at the agency.

4. The actual meetings took place individually, in the evening, at the appointed place. Aside from the signing of the previously agreed-upon Permission to Audio-tape, the interviews were unstructured. The atmosphere was very informal, much like having an acquaintance over for coffee and discussing a problem. Interviews were concluded with the invitation for each person to contact the other at any time should additional questions or information arise. One participant took advantage of this invitation to further discuss his experience.

5. In two instances the survivor was present in the house but totally physically removed from the interview.

6. Audio tapes were transcribed verbatim. These transcripts became the data which were analyzed phenomenologically.

7. Thematic analysis was undertaken to determine the presence of patterns in the experience. (See following section on Thematic Analysis.)

8. Copies of the Thematic Analysis and the verbal description were delivered to the participants to be read and validated as representing their understanding of their experience. Arrangements were made for individual meetings to discuss their reactions and any added material which may have developed since the last interview.

9. Any appropriate additional observations were integrated into final extraction of meta-themes.

Thematic Analysis of Protocols

Colaizzi (1978), Giorgi (1975), and Van Kaam (1966) discuss the process of phenomenological analysis of descriptive data. Colaizzi's description of the process is most detailed and explicit, and was the model for this study.

1. The protocols are first read through to get a feel for the language and perspective of the experiencer.

2. Protocols were re-read, this time on a line-by-line basis, with the intent of selecting those significant statements which refer specifically to the event in question. In this study, statements about the behavior of the survivor were included only when required for background to the partner's experience (i.e. "...she just exploded through the roof. I just sat there blown away. I just couldn't believe it." When the relationship to the offender was pertinent it was mentioned as part of the partner's experience.) If there exists a structural element to the partner's experience, it will emerge regardless of the situational aspects of the survivor's abuse, therefore references to the circumstances of the assault are not pertinent.

3. Significant statements were re-read, this time for the purpose of ascertaining the meaning behind the words. Phenomenological rather than phenomenal analysis was employed, meaning that the interpretation rather than the content of the statements is the focus. Analysis did not focus on for instance, the number of times work or family or feelings are mentioned in the protocols, but how his being the partner of an incest survivor affected his relationship to his work, family or feelings.

There is a creative risk in the process at this point, since the researcher must not only be true to the data, but to the significance of the data themselves, without allowing her previously acknowledged "lens", or bracketed pre-conceptions, to override the intention of the experiencer. In this study, references to aspects of the survivor/partner relationship could be interpreted in terms of *anima/animus* interaction. Although that interpretation may be correct, it speaks more for the interpreter than for the experiencer.

This formulation of meanings for each significant statement is repeated for each protocol.

4. Formulated meanings, or themes, were placed in their natural groups or clusters. The emergence of themes common to all protocols will assist the organization of clusters. The applying of the template of emerged clusters to each protocol will validate the accuracy of their selection. The inclusion of seemingly contradictory elements found in different protocols is a necessary dynamic of phenomenological analysis. "Being true to the things themselves" is not required **only** in cases where those "things" make sense to us, but perhaps even more so when we have not deciphered **their** logic.

5. Having sufficiently challenged the emerged structure, and being satisfied that it truly accounts for the necessary and sufficient elements of the experience, the next step was the integration of those elements into an exhaustive description of the experience.

6. The exhaustive description was then reduced as far as possible into an exact and succinct statement of the identifying aspects of the experience.

The partners' experiences were further analyzed in terms of their reflection of mythical representation of human experience in the fairy tale *Beauty and the Beast*, as well as their representation of existential themes.

Verification

Verification is the seventh step in Colaizzi's analytical process.

Returning to the co-researchers and allowing them to judge the accuracy of the researcher's representation of their story is the final step in phenomenological analysis. Packer (1985) discusses the hermeneutic or interpretive approach as primarily perspectival. As described under **Validity** in Chapter 2, the scrutinizing of the written interpretation by the co-researchers is one method of testing the accuracy of the description and the interpretation of the experience. Each of the four co-researchers read and concurred with the author's interpretation of their transcript. The data was also found to resonate with the experience of a partner who was not included in the study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

"The focus in existential-phenomenological psychotherapy is, then, on the client's experiences as they are experienced without the temptation to investigate the truth of the experience" (King, Valle & Citrenbaum, 1978, p. 267.)

Chapter Four contains a verbal description and a tabular presentation of the thematic analysis of each participant's experience as the partner of an incest survivor. The verbal description is in two parts - an introduction to the participant in the form of some personal and relationship background, and the story of his partnership per se.

Two tables accompany each of the four descriptions. Table One shows the flow of the analysis of data. For Tables 2, 4, 6 and 8, Column One contains excerpts from the participant's transcript, Column Two contains a paraphrase of the meaning of the excerpt, while Column Three presents the themes of those excerpts. Tables 3, 5, 7 and 9 list the clustered themes of the previous tables and include an expanded description of those themes. Numbers included with each theme refer to the excerpt of the same number in the respective transcript.

Table 10 lists all of the themes found in the four transcripts, and defines those themes. Table 11 presents the higher order themes extracted from the first order clusters of themes in Tables 3, 5, 7 and 9.

The themes of each transcript fell into a similar pattern, but different aspects of the pattern were more or less dominant in each participants' experience.

Table 1

Flow of Analysis of Data

	Within Persons Analysis		Between Persons Analysis	
Co-Researcher	1st Order Themes	Clustered Themes	Accumulated Themes	2nd Order Themes
David	Table 2	Table 3	Table 10	Table 11
Michael	Table 4	Table 5		
Robert	Table 6	Table 7		
Greg	Table 8	Table 9		

Participant's Individual Experiences

DAVID

Personal and Relationship Background

David is in his early thirties. Both he and his younger sister, with whom he says he has nothing in common, are the adopted children of a retired armed forces family. One of his stronger childhood impressions was that the world is transient and people are only in his life temporarily. He describes his family as "not close," but his mother as "over-protective." He says he saw his parents fight but never saw them caring for each other.

David was skipped two grades in elementary school on the basis of ability. He says it took him a long time to connect that fact with his persistent feeling of being a social and emotional misfit. Being developmentally out of step with his classmates and socially out of step with age-mates, he had "maybe two dates" in high school. As soon as he was old enough he joined the army and became a paratrooper. He said he then went on a "binge of groupies whose sole aim in life was to be had by a paratrooper."

David was married for a short time at twenty-two, "too young and stupid to know you have to work at it afterwards." He had few relationships, none serious, for a number of years before he met E., an incest survivor.

He said that until that time he had probably never felt love. He feels he "is a newcomer to appreciating relationships."

Besides attending the support group, David has seen two counselors. One of them he said "was alright, at least she listened. The other one didn't want to talk about what was really going on in my life."

David values principles and integrity and doing a job properly. He considers himself "a dinosaur - basically monogamous - who still believes in knights and white horses and stuff like that." He consented willingly to the interview partly because it gave him an opportunity to talk with someone about his experience, and partly because he hoped it would help other partners.

Significant excerpts from David's transcript follow.

Table 2

Thematic Abstractions of David's Experience

Excerpts from Transcribed Interview	Two Levels of Abstraction 1. Paraphrases	2. Themes
D1: I met this girl - neat girl - kind of different. Things clicked off fairly well as far as information, you know, the sharing of information which I kind of found unusual just starting off a relationship.	This woman struck him as out of the ordinary; it seemed pleasant and unusual to get to know each other so easily.	Connection to the Survivor
D2: I believe her - when she said it was the first time she'd ever talked about it (the abuse) with anyone. Well, we talked about that a whole night, until the middle of the night talking about all that. Talked about it shortly a couple of times after that and there was no more said about it. Not knowing anything I figured well she's got that off her chest - now everything's great - now life can go on.	Felt trusted and received by her; experienced openness between them; his ignorance of long-term effects of incest allowed him to see only positive implications of her revelation of abuse.	Level of Incest Literacy
D3: As she explained her past relationships it became really obvious that she would set her life up in patterns, in cycles - to keep repeating the same things.	Realized a cyclical pattern to her past behavior, but felt their relationship may be a change in that pattern.	Search for Understanding
D4: It was realy kind of confusing. She could be an extremely considerate and caring person, and then could be so extremely short tempered and irrational as far as response could go. Really make you shake your head and say is this real, is this the same person here?	Confused by mood swings and conflict in her behavior; no context for understanding or predicting her extreme fluctuations.	Sense of Bewilderment
D5: Things started shifting into an alternating routine pretty well like clockwork. Monday everything would be wine and roses. Tuesday would be vinegar. Wednesday everything would be wine and roses again. Next day would be vinegar. As this went on for a while I started getting really screwed just trying to keep track of what was what. There was no consistency - one day it was I love you and the next day it was Jesus Christ roar roar raising hell... and nothing but arguments and complaints. This went on for months.	Experienced being alternately pulled toward and pushed away from the survivor; experienced difficulty maintaining his equilibrium in the face of inconsistent acceptance and rejection.	Yo-yo Syndrome

D6: The only thing that never went to hell was the sexual thing. We hit it off quite well in that area - exceedingly well. There was never any doubt about her interest that way.	Strong mutual sexual attraction; positive reinforcement and good channel of communication.	Connection to the Survivor
D7: I was at the point of no return (in the relationship). I really didn't handle it well.	He was committed to her and to the relationship; fell short of masculine identity with expectation for competence.	Effect on Self-Image
D8: It screwed me up to the point where I couldn't work, I couldn't do anything, my mind was on nothing but this.	Ability to function at work is impaired; relationship issues absorbed him completely.	Systemic Influence
D9: What's the problem - what the hell's going on and what can be done to fix it. Am I doing something wrong that I'm not seeing or what? Like what the hell have I done to deserve this?	Attempts to cope by analyzing the problem so as maintain control; feeling he might be responsible for their difficulties.	Sense of Responsibility
D10. And why the hell is she doing this? A combination of what the hell's wrong with her and what the hell's wrong with me,	No context for understanding her behavior or the dynamics of their relationship.	Level of Incest Literacy
D11. And then you're starting to say what the hell's wrong with me that I'm taking this?	Experiences self-doubt; challenge to self-esteem; lack of sense of control over his life.	Effect on Self-Image
D12. I think I learned a hell of a lot. I was learning things through her, and she was learning things through me - and that's your greatest kind of relationship - to me it is anyway - it like a pair of catalysts, just sort of goin'- and I'd never been in a relationship that had that kind of interaction before - this is great. Somebody really sees me - and the only person I'd ever met in my life who was able to get me to look at me! There was just something about her that made me want to pay attention and listen to what was being said - it's really hard to explain. I'm not sure I understand how it happened. It just happened.	Values the relationship for its potential as a shared learning, growing situation; experiences himself as more honest and responsible when he is with her; values her for her ability to promote his self-awareness; excited at feeling "seen" by another.	

D13: Basically what happened was once it was out in the open - square flat down and accepted - Yes! WE DO have a future - we are close - that seems to be about the point where she said "Whoa, hold it, this can't be happening, this isn't right sort of thing." And she started falling back into the same sort of routine that she described herself as having immediately following her family affair and repeating it almost to a tee.	Begins to see their relationship as following the survivor's past pattern; experiencing confusion over the survivor's fear of intimacy; confused by alternating acceptance and rejection from survivor.	Onset of Conflict
D14: For some reason a lot of girls I end up dating have all been abused. I guess there must be something about me that draws 'em like a magnet. (Q. Do know what that is?) No. I guess maybe they just feel safe, maybe - I don't know.	Becoming aware of a history of attracting abused women; is not aware of projecting the wounded feminine side of his personality; perceives himself as representing safety to abused women.	Self-Reflection
D15: Pretty much the way I went through it is - "OK, sorry that happened - no more: you don't have to do that any more - it's over and done with." Somehow the idea just came around - watching her life repeating itself, whoa - you know, it's not all over just because she's got it off her chest.	Assumed that given the opportunity, the survivor would be able to change old patterns; discovered that "telling the secret" opened issues rather than closed them.	Level of Incest Literacy
D16: This is where I got the opportunity to prove my ability to become an idiot at all costs. This is where I put on my knight-in-shining-armor suit and go out to find the magical cure.	Identifying with the Hero archetype in feeling that he has the personal power to solve the problem.	Sense of Responsibility
D17: About a month before that I just broke down at work - just jelloed out - we're talking mega-stress - finally I just sat down and didn't get up - just quit everything - a couple people took me over to the hospital the emergency ward there - they lined me up with a shrink.	Experiencing overwhelming stress and loss of control; fell into the gap between the real and the ideal; forced to focus on himself instead of his fiancee.	Self-Care
D18: I found that to be the hardest thing out of the whole event - was getting a hold of anyone who knew anything.	Asking for help and having great difficulty finding information or support from public agencies.	Isolation
D19: D: Well, strangely enough throughout all this - I figured she was still worth hanging on for. Not just willing - I wanted to - and everyone figured I was a loon. I said "Shit, everyone figures I'm nuts still thinking about you."	Honoring his feeling of wanting to invest in the relationship; expressed his commitment to her.	Connection to the Survivor

D20: I would guess her life had really been kind of hell.	Analyzing and attempting to understand her behavior; feeling empathy for her bleak past on the basis of his experience.	Search for Understanding
D21: No, I mean after all the shit we've been through and all that had happened she still wanted to get a hold of me and I was still willing to listen. It might not sound rational to anyone, but that's the was it was.	Even though the relationship failed, he felt their desire to stay in contact with each other.	Connection to the Survivor
D22: All my friends figured I was totally out to lunch. I mean " Ah, why don't you just go out and forget her. No woman's worth that." Within my friends I became kind of like the village idiot. So I just said the hell with you guys - I don't need this shit.	Feels abused and unsupported by friends; clashes with their traditional masculine values of control and superiority; separates from the group.	Isolation
D23: Not just my life is affected - it's affecting her boy's life, my boy's life - there's a whole chain reaction that comes up - It was so hard.	Experiences a negative impact in all areas of his life.	Systemic Influence
D24: One thing that was really strange was seeing, or reading stories and books - and seeing something and thinking "Oh shit, I've done that" or whatever. I'd think "Oh god, am I a woman abuser?" If you think about what you're reading, there's a lot of scary stuff - in a lot of places there's a really thin line between what is abuse and what isn't. One of the group facilitators (a woman) helped me sort that out - motivation.	Acquiring factual information about incest; confronting his behavior; experiencing fear, guilt regarding possibly abusive acts; seeking explanation for the nature of abuse; examining his motives.	Self-Reflection
D25: You start to see the pattern. In some of the women's stories of how they reacted later in their life - I'd see exactly how she reacted with her life. It was freaky.	Begins to have an understanding of his former fiancee's behavior; appreciates the pervasive impact of incest; better able to sort out responsibility.	Level of Incest Literacy
D26: - so few people are willing to talk about the subject. You stop bringing it up.	Feels silenced.	Isolation
D27: I hadn't realized until I got into the reading that the problem was near the size it was. If someone had asked me how often I thought it was I would have said one in every 350,000 or something. That's really what I would have figured.	Realizing he had no understanding of the scope or impact of incest.	Level of Incest Literacy

D28: I'm luckier than most because I have managed to get some fingers pointed in the right direction. One more phone call saying "we don't know" and I would have given up.	Feels fortunate to have found help in dealing with his situation; acceptance of not being in control in this case.	Self-Care
D29: You just feel lonely, and stubborn - from one point of view it's honorable from another it's nuts. Who knows.	Feeling alone; standing his ground; assessing possible interpretations of his behavior.	Search for Understanding
D30: The experience was kind of like hell. But only if you care about them. If you don't care it's "I'm outa here." There's enough shit that goes on to say "I'm outa here charlie."	An emotional connection to the survivor makes both options - to stay or to go - equally painful. He gave himself permission to leave if he chose.	Negative Nature of the Experience
The following data is from a subsequent phone call. Some is direct quotation, some is paraphrase.		
D31: -he experienced an "absolute feeling of anger" - during the relationship he tried not to let it come up so it wouldn't be added to hers.	He felt extremely angry during the relationship; felt he had to repress negative emotions to avoid adding to her anger.	Negative Nature of the Experience
D32: (-he remembered) really being flamed at her dad. Don't have a clue what I would have done if I'd ever had to meet him.	Experienced overwhelming anger at the offender; would have had difficulty confronting him in person.	Secondary Victimization
D33: Don't ever remember being that angry at anyone. He ripped her off, he ripped me off. Angry for her and me too. Even at her mom. She had to know. She and her husband would drink and have arguments and her mom made her get up and go sleep with her dad - who was not exactly "quiet" about it - the whole family had to know.	Feeling victimized by the offender; experiencing rage at being helpless; identifying with the victim out of his own unconscious wounds.	Secondary Victimization
D34: - I was identifying her as two different people - the angry little girl and the normal person - and I'd wait and see whichever role she was in for the day and she was in it to the hilt - keeps me off guard all the time - on a daily basis.	Attempting to cope with the problem by analyzing the situation; kept off balance by mood swings.	Sense of Bewilderment
D35: - I was angry at mutual friends. Some people seem to immediately pick a side, or take her to bed.	Angry at friends for enhancing polarization or blatant sabotage, rather than supporting relationship; friendships were seriously impacted by his involvement.	Systemic Influence

D36: His friends ridiculed his stand to hang in with the relationship - he'd be told "she's not worth it", "no woman's worth it" and his feelings were ignored by his friends. "It's to a point now that I don't see a single person that I saw then. I don't fit in with them and they don't quite fit my idea of friends anymore."	Rejecting former friends on the basis of lack of respect for his feelings; forming values which separate him from "the crowd"; altering his concept of friendship.	Moving Toward Personal Value System
D37: He'd say "Who the hell are these people- they stand up for nothing - believe in nothing. He didn't need to hear them say give up. "I guess that's a common attitude today - the soap operas tell us to give up - it's abnormal if you don't. Even if somebody who was pretty sharp went over the whole thing and said I was nuts or not, I wouldn't believe them - I was doing what I believed in.	He has grown beyond his old crowd and their "soap opera" approach to life; chooses to stand by his commitment regardless of external opinion.	Moving Toward Personal Value System
D38: Parents get strange - no matter what happens they say "She's horrible and you're right" - no objective view from them either.	Experienced the previous "over-protective" stance from parents, rather than support; relationship with parents impacted by his involvement.	Systemic Influence
D39: If I hadn't met some of the people from the (Sexual Assault) center I would have started to agree and say "yes, I am crazy" and start to wonder about it.	Experiences validation of his feelings; was experiencing doubts and weak self-esteem.	Effect on Self-Image
D40. The people at work were surprisingly good - which shocked me. They were supportive of his commitment - which added to the confusion - but felt good nonetheless.	Was pleased to receive support for his commitment from a least likely source.	Self-Care
D41: Would be nice to come out and say "you're pissing me off", but he never expressed his anger at her - it was like walking on eggs all the time. "I was too damned afraid that if I got angry I'd blow it."	Awareness of his anger, and of his fear of expressing it; felt it was necessary to repress his anger in order to preserve the relationship.	Sense of Responsibility
D42: First time I felt good was after contact with one of the volunteers on the crisis line - here's someone who doesn't start right off saying, you're nuts. It's the norm to quit. The first major relief to come along was that conversation. Somewhere, anywhere where you're not being watched with a cocked eye.	Feeling validated to finally contact someone with experience in dealing with the effects of incest; feeling relieved at not being treated like a crazy person.	Effect on Self-Image

Table 3

Higher Order Thematic Description of David's Experience

Thematic Clusters	Generalized Descriptions
1. Connection to Survivor (Excerpts from Table I: 1, 6, 12, 19, 21)	Felt this girl was unusual in a "neat" way; felt they were catalysts for each other's learning; realizing a deeper level of relationship than he had previously experienced; felt seen by her and was able to see himself with her in a way he had never experienced with other women; good sexual expression throughout relationship; even though the relationship ended he was aware of it's positive aspects.
2. Negative Nature of the Experience (30, 31)	The experience is demanding and unpleasant enough to want to leave; leaving is also demanding and unpleasant, however, since he must give up a relationship he sees as potentially fulfilling.
3. Search for Understanding (3, 20, 29)	Recognizes patterns in his fiancee's past; attempting to assess their meaning in his life and their relationship; trying to explain her behavior by imagining it's source; assessing possible interpretations of his behavior, from "honorable" to "nuts".
4. Sense of Bewilderment (4, 34)	Unable to keep a sense of balance around his fiancee's inconsistent behavior; has no understanding of her conflicts to help him take a constructive position.
5. Systemic Influence of the Experience (8, 23, 35, 38)	Experiences "fall-out" from the relationship affecting many other areas of his life: his performance at work deteriorated; his physical health was affected; their respective children were confused; relationships with friends altered drastically; his parents became involved.
6. Effect on Self-Image (7, 11, 39, 42)	High expectations for fulfilling masculine values of competence and control were not met in the relationship; feeling to blame, at one point, for the difficulties in the relationship; doubting his perception of events; experiencing low self-esteem for "taking this"; starting to wonder if he was "crazy".
7. Moving Toward Personal Value System (36, 37)	Standing by his convictions regardless of whether or not they are appreciated others; taking a personally relevant stand based on personal values; examining friends sexist positions.
8. Sense of Responsibility (9, 16, 41)	Exaggerated sense of personal power; feeling it is in his power to "fix the problem"; feeling perhaps he is causing the problem; identifying with the "hero" archetype in feeling that he has the power to "put on his knight in shining armor suit and go out and find the magical cure"; making unilateral decisions in terms of deciding what was good for the relationship (i.e. repressing his anger and frustration).

9. Level of Incest Literacy (2, 10, 15, 25, 27)	Lack of acquaintance with the legacy of incest left him unaware of the significance of his fiancee's disclosure of abuse; unable to put his fiancee's behavior in a realistic context; assumed that safety and reassurance from him would be sufficient to help her break old patterns; integrating literature on incest with his experience; becomes aware of the scope and intensity of the effects of incest, and of the fact that it something "bigger than he is".
10. Self-Reflection (14, 24)	Reflects on possible reasons for his being involved with many abused women; feels he represents safety for them; questioning whether he was responsible for abusive behavior in the past; attending two series of support group meetings for partners of survivors; examining old behaviors with women; becoming aware of what constitutes abuse.
11. Self-Care (17, 28, 40)	Forced to acknowledge he had exhausted his resources for coping alone; allowed himself to be treated for depression; took strenuous steps on his own behalf to seek information and support; allowed himself to feel support from co- workers.
12. Isolation (18, 22, 26)	Felt scapegoated by friends; encountered an enormous void in information and support; realized the disparity between his values and those of people with whom he had previously felt comfortable; felt silenced.
13. Secondary Victimization (32, 33)	Experienced his life being violated by the offender; felt a rage that came from being powerless to confront the offender, or change or cope with the results of the offender's actions.
14. Onset of Conflict (13)	The stage of the relationship when intimacy becomes a threat to the survivor and the partner begins experiencing the approach/avoidance pattern.
15. Yo-yo Syndrome (5)	The partner alternately experiences attraction and rejection from the survivor on an inconsistent basis.

David's Experience

After having "got his rabbit days over with early" and settling down to raise his son, David never went from one relationship easily into the next. He said he needed time to "clear his head" in between. There was the occasional encounter of a couple months duration - nothing serious - until he met a girl who was "kind of different." This girl seemed to stand out for David because it seemed so easy for them to learn about themselves through each other. "That's your greatest kind of relationship - to me it is anyway." She was the only person he'd ever met who "was able to get me to look at me."

"Within every man is the reflection of a woman, and within every woman is the reflection of a man" is an old American Indian proverb (Sanford, 1980). David only knew "something about her made me want to pay attention." Jung (1964) describes one of the positive functions of a man's inner woman or *anima*, as the ability "to put him in touch with the right inner values." A man who is unconscious of his feminine side will see her reflected in a similar outer woman. When a man finds this reflection of himself in a woman, he will often cling to her beyond all reason. He may feel, and rightly so, that she is not just another female but represents a part of himself. Breaking away from a traditional masculine perspective which demanded that he take responsibility for the situation, be in control and perform successfully, and moving toward a more personal connection with this woman seems to be a theme in David's experience. David's conditioned sense of masculine superiority and his girl friend's incest have split each of them away from their inner sexual opposite. These conditions set the framework for their dynamics as a couple.

This mutual feeling of knowing each other very well soon led to the revelation of her past abuse. David was not aware of the impact or dynamics of incestuous abuse, and assumed that the furthering of trust and intimacy was the only significance of her revelation. He said "Well, she's got that off her chest - now everything's great - now life can go on." David's perception of the situation was "...it's over and done with - you don't have to do that any more." He saw himself as representing safety for her and assumed that, the secret being out, things could only improve. In fact, the safer he tried to make her feel, the further she ran.

David became aware that E. was creating patterns she had described as being characteristic of her past. He experienced a great deal of confusion when confronted with her mood swings and "illogical" reactions. Her "consideration and caring" could change quickly to "short-tempered and irrational". He said it would "really make you shake your head and say 'Is this real? Is this the same person here?" A "consistently inconsistent" pattern of "one day, wine and roses - the next day, vinegar" developed. He experienced a yo-yo syndrome of one day hearing "I love you" and making long term plans, and the next day he and the plans were put off and "it was nothing but arguments and complaints." David felt he was "walking on eggs" all the time. Because he had not yet begun to acquaint himself with the literature on incest he had no context in which to understand her behavior. He was not able to take a position from which to nurture himself or be of real help to E. As a result he began to be drawn further into the roles demanded by their projections and focus exclusively on her problems.

David's life in a military family, and having had a military career of his own would certainly have reinforced his exposure to the image of the male as all-competent hero. Said David, "This is where I put on my knight-in-shining-armor suit and go out to find the magical cure." David was laughing at himself when he described the image, but at the time he had a real sense of having the ability to fix the problem. Being over-identified with an image of the hero also carried the childhood perspective of "if it's happening, I must be causing it." This inflated sense of responsibility created enormous stress in David. In his mind the conflict in the relationship must be his fault, and it was his responsibility to resolve it.

The stress spilled over into virtually every area of David's life feeding a mounting spiral of frustration. His pre-teenage son was confused about the status of David's relationship with E. and was reacting to the level of stress in the home. There was a great deal of affection between David and E.'s young son. The off-again-on-again status of the relationship induced in David a lot of guilt for this attachment, knowing the pain it would cause both him and the child should the relationship end. The distance in David's relationship with his parents was reinforced by their taking sides (even if it was his side) instead of supporting his relationship.

David's relationship with friends was influenced by the abuse. He was not shy about seeking information and asking for leads to sources of help. Neither did E. keep the situation a secret. His friends let David know that "No woman was worth that." To a man fighting for "his woman" this is heresy. Among his friends David said he became "kind of like the village idiot" for putting up with all the confusion. Unlike some cultures, ours does not have a place for "village idiot's" special perspective.

David's ability to concentrate became impaired. "It screwed me up to the point where I couldn't work - I couldn't concentrate on anything - my mind was on nothing but this." David's effectiveness at work was jeopardized to the extent that he was hospitalized at one point because he "just jello-ed out, just sat down and didn't get up." He was treated for depression, probably symptomatic of the deadlock between his enormous sense of responsibility and his frail status as merely human. He was pleasantly surprised to find his co-workers supportive of his commitment. This fact "added to the confusion but felt good nevertheless."

"The only thing that never went to hell was the sexual thing. We hit it off quite well in that area." David was never in any doubt that she was interested in him sexually. It is the power of an unconscious *anima* and *animus* to keep a couple fascinated with each other on a subtle level while they struggle with surface manifestations of the projection.

When John Wayne set out to "taking care of everything" for the "little lady", he never failed. Gilgamesh found that gods may never fail, but men do (Mason, 1970). To the degree that men's souls have been infected by the idea that they have the power of gods, to that degree their self-image must suffer when they find they are not in control. David experienced a challenge to his self-image when he could not "do something" to heal the relationship. His self-esteem was attacked by the idea that he was "taking this shit." In our cultural mythology, real men are not controlled by women. David experienced a painful break from that culturally assigned stance.

Another challenge to his self-image came in the form of information about incest. Reading the histories of abuse in women's lives triggered the fear that David might be a "woman-abuser" himself. He was aware that a lot of women he had dated had been abused, but did not understand the dynamics of that pattern. Having been taught to denigrate the feminine in himself (Silverberg, 1986), it is not surprising that he might begin to feel some responsibility for that abuse.

When he began looking for help David experienced a taste of the survivor's status as scapegoat. He was silenced by the reaction he received when he tried to speak about his situation. "So few people are willing to talk about the subject you just stop bringing it up." His friends ridiculed his stand to hang in with the relationship. "It's to the point now that I don't see a single person that I saw then. I don't fit in with them and they don't quite fit my idea of friends anymore."

The experience not only isolated David from people but from previously held ideas of what constitutes friendship and what he seeks in a love relationship. During this time David had no supportive or objective, much less informed, perspective to help him take a position from which to care for himself. He had no outlet for his frustration and anger. He felt blocked in his attempts to seek counseling since E. was not interested.

David reported suppressing a great deal of anger during the relationship. His sense of responsibility kept him from expressing his anger at the time because he was "too damned afraid that if I got angry I'd blow it." His anger toward the offender was never expressed either. He did not want to "add it to hers." David's status as a secondary victim of the incest is pointedly expressed by his description of "never having been so angry at anyone - he ripped her off and he ripped me off, too." He was experiencing rage at having his life affected by an agent he was powerless to confront, whose actions he was powerless to change, the results of which were almost overwhelming.

David's method of coping, both during and after the break-up of the relationship, was to "try and find anyone who knew anything." His need for information to help him make some sense of the experience took him to "every government and social agency in the book." After some thirty phone calls, each time relating his story, he finally was told to try and contact the Sexual Assault Center. "The first time I felt good was after contact with one of the volunteers on the crisis line. Here's someone who doesn't start right off saying you're nuts." Later, after the relationship had ended, he attended two series of support group sessions for partners of incest survivors. This reflection in a supportive environment allowed him to ask questions out loud which before had only been fearful suspicions. His concept of relationships broadened to include sex within a context of intimacy. In spite of these changes, the nature of the adjectives and images David used to describe his experience were generally negative. He used words like "lonely," "ripped off," "loon," "idiot," "crazy," and "mega-stress." He described the experience as "kind of like hell, but only if you care." He was caught on the horns of a painful dilemma - hell and his lady inextricably intertwined - he must take or leave them both.

One of the end results of the experience for David was the movement towards a more personal value system. The nature of his commitment was such that he feels that even today "if someone pretty sharp were to go over the whole thing and tell me I was crazy, I wouldn't believe them. I was doing what I believed in." One of his biggest complaints against his friends was not that they disagreed with him so much as they didn't believe in anything. "The soap operas tell us to give up - it's abnormal if you don't." Their role-appropriate, sexist attitude, that "no woman" is worth suffering for, caused him to evaluate whether or not he and his friends could still identify with the same values.

David waited for over a year before finally letting go of the relationship. His former girl-friend had moved away before he accepted that she was gone and the "go-away-closer" pattern had ended. He still cares, but it is no longer like hell. He feels lucky to have found help for himself, and sad not to be sharing it with her. Towards the end of the relationship the bond was still evident. His feeling was "strangely enough, through all this, I figured she was still worth hanging on for. Not just willing - I wanted to - and everyone figured I was a loon." He felt like "after all the shit we've been through...she still wanted to get a hold of me and I was still willing to listen. It might not sound rational to anyone but that's the way it was."

David said that he learned a lot from the experience, and he did. He also took some major steps from a somewhat collective, go-along-with-the-crowd type of life, toward a more individuated, true-to-him self stance relative to the world.

Michael

Personal and Relationship Background

Michael was reluctant to be interviewed because he felt that his wife had "gone through the worst of it" and done a considerable amount of work on herself before they were seriously involved. He did not think he would therefore have much to contribute.

Michael is in his early thirties and was married for the first time about a year ago. He described his family of origin as "normal" and did not feel he knew much about his parent's relationship. Michael attended a partner's support group at the Sexual Assault Center where his wife was seeing a counselor. He found it interesting and helpful but felt that his situation was much less difficult than that of some of the other group members.

Michael "had always figured himself for a bachelor." He had never been particularly lonely either, always being able to "find something to do and friends to do it with." He had dated a number of women who had been abused and commented that he sometimes felt like a "social worker." He said it took him by surprise when he found himself becoming romantically involved after being good friends with the survivor for some time. One thing he especially appreciated from his wife was her telling him early in their courtship about her abuse and her previous coping pattern of running when things became "too serious." He felt he was explicitly given an opportunity to decide whether or not to become further involved before having made a serious emotional commitment.

Even though Michael and his wife are "good friends and talk about everything" there are similarities between his experience and that of the other partners.

Excerpts from Michael's transcript follow.

Table 4

Thematic Abstractions of Michael's Experience

Excerpts from Transcribed Interview	Two Levels of Abstraction 1. Paraphrases	2. Themes
M1: Sometimes it's hard to know if she's reacting to something in her past, or if it's just the way she is - if she had a rough day on the job or something y'know, it's hard to tell if it's that, or it's just the day.	Difficulty isolating effects of sexual abuse in personality.	Search for Understanding
M2: I can relate how she's feeling to maybe other things that happened to me - that made me feel violated?	Empathizes with the survivor on the basis of his own experience of being hurt.	Search for Understanding
M3: Well - I have to learn not to let her up's and down's pull me up and down. When things are going great - they're going great, but maybe the next day they could start on a downturn, and for the first while I let them take me down too. Now I'm getting smarter I guess - with every up or with every down I can foresee the opposite coming down the road.	Maintaining boundaries; perceiving and anticipating patterns.	Ability to Cope
M4: I'm the type of person that likes emotional closeness - I enjoy that - I like cuddly type stuff in front of the TV - I miss that. When she's quite hostile - not as far as destroying the place - but she can withdraw and spend time in her room. And so I kind of miss those times.	Values intimacy; aware of need for affection and companionship.	Recognizes His Needs
M5: And for the first while I thought "What does this mean y'know? Does this mean we're not going to get married? Does it mean we're falling apart? Just what does it mean?	Earlier in the relationship he had difficulty interpreting his fiancee's behavior; interpreted distance as rejection.	Sense of Bewilderment
M6: So things kind of flip-flop. When things are great, they're great, and sometimes there's distance there and I feel it but I've seen there's a pattern there, and I've also seen lot's of improvement in the relationship.	Experiences cyclical nature of mood swings; aware of patterns in survivor's behavior; is encouraged by positive changes.	Yo-Yo Syndrome
M7: She wanted to warn me that she had this kind of history of running - that when things started to get too serious she just felt like she was being smothered. So I appreciated her telling me that and from then on it was "What's going on?" - things started getting frustrating.	Experienced the benefit of survivor's self-awareness; reality of seemingly contradictory behavior is nevertheless frustrating.	Onset of Conflict

M8: I'd be talking to her every couple of days or so and the conversation would be great and the next time it would be distant and I'd be thinking "Oh, I guess we're splitting up".	Analyzing contradictory experiences of intimacy and rejection; experiencing unstable status of relationship.	Yo-Yo Syndrome
M9: I had all kinds of problems concentrating on other things. I never really was able to accomplish separating that part of my life - just say I'll shut it down for now and come back to it in an hour and do this or that. I probably couldn't concentrate on anything else for more than five or ten minutes without sitting back and thinking "What gives" - with whatever's happening at the time. If I tried to accomplish anything it was just a waste of time.	Experienced pervasive effect of stress from unstable status of relationship; unable to compartmentalize emotional life; diminished ability to concentrate on other issues.	Systemic Influence
M10: If I didn't know what had happened to her I probably could have said "Screw this and so long...." I knew that it wasn't really her and that she was struggling herself. If I had known that it was really her and that she felt comfortable with distance and all that - if I knew that that's what she really wanted, then I would have had no problem - but I knew that she as struggling. I would have felt like I was abandoning her or something if I would have said screw it - I felt that lots of times - "I don't need this" and "I don't want this" either, but maybe I'm a sucker, but - I know for a fact that she'd opened up to me more about it than to anyone else. She kind of showed a trust in me that way. So - when she told me that, it just kind of started the relationship off in a way that I didn't want to say screw it. I mean I wanted to but I couldn't, because I knew what she was going through, or that she was going through something. And I knew that she could be affectionate - I did see that there was love there.	Analyzing his reasons for staying in the relationship; appreciating the survivor's commitment to her healing; separating the problem from the person; realizing her honesty and vulnerability; feeling needed, trusted and loved; experiences willingness to share in the survivor's healing task when he sees her taking responsibility for herself.	Expression of Commitment
M11: I just thought that if I was to get up and say forget it and leave and just say - "Let someone else take care of you" - I don't feel I would be worthy of anything else really - anything better.	Sense of self-worth demands honoring his emotional investment in the survivor "for better of worse."	Effect on Self-Image

M12: I kind of guessed that it was her brother - I hadn't met the guy and I didn't know if I wanted to meet him but I wanted to kill him sometimes.	Experiencing emotional reaction to the offender: rejection, anger and aggression.	Relationship to the Offender
M13. He started with her and when her younger sister got to be five or six he started with her, so if it was a one time thing I wouldn't be so concerned. But he's got girls now, and they're about five or six now. So, we were at her sister's the other day with her and her husband and the four of were trying to decide how we should handle this - her parents were kind of shocked.	Sexual abuse pervades his relationship with in-laws; instigates concern for other children in family, (and possibly, his own future children).	Systemic Influence
M14: You sure don't feel like shaking his hand when you go to see him - unless you follow it with a good knee or something.	Distrusts the offender and feels need to maintain some control over him.	Relationship to the Offender
M15: One guy's (from the support group) wife would tell him to get out and he'd leave - I can't just leave - what if she slashed her wrist or something.	Feels responsibility for preventing his wife from hurting herself; desire to maintain some control over the situation.	Sense of Responsibility
M16: I never felt like she was playing games with my head, or anything like that - I know I've tried to not let it bother me if she is feeling a little distant or withdrawn. You always want to get in there and do something and make it better, but in actuality, you just have to kind of ride it out and let her feel down.	Does not feel controlled by his wife; taking responsibility for himself; empowering his wife by allowing her to deal with her own feelings.	Ability to Cope
M17: She'll comfort me y'know, "Don't worry, I know I'll come out on the other end". But for me it's kind of hard to stand by and watch this. You kind of don't want to watch someone going through this kind of thing.	Resisting the temptation to rescue his wife; identifying with her pain; identifying painful nature of the experience.	Negative Nature of the Experience
M18: I don't think that I'm God or anything. If I could fix it I would but I know that I can't do much more than be there for her. At the same time I don't want to be storming out the door either - saying "When you feel better I'll be back". I kind of like to be around.	Realizing his real capabilities; does not feel the need to punish or control the survivor, but needs to be included in her process.	Recognizing His Needs

M19: I think it's just a learning thing - to expect the ups and down - if things are really going really good, I may not get as elated about it as I would in the past because I know that there's a down coming and I don't want to set myself up for the letdown either.	Has gained some understanding of the process and can take a self-nurturing position relative to that process.	Ability to Cope
M20: I'm an emotional kind of guy myself - and I have to hang on a little bit myself and I can't just ride with the tide.	Awareness of self; perceiving his boundaries, aware of his needs.	Self-Care
M21: I don't have to be on the roller coaster - I was just changed a bit as far as not trying to patch thing's up - y'know "What's wrong, what's wrong?" - I just let her know that I do love her, and go do what needs to be done.	Learned to identify less closely with the survivor's mood swings; has limited his responsibility for "fixing" the situation; is able to support the survivor and take care of himself.	Ability to Cope
M22: ...and I can't say the right things all the time either.	Realizing his limitations; allowing himself to not have all the answers.	Sense of Responsibility
M23: With me, one thing I was more scared of was whether she would act out her own abuse...you hear about that happening.	Negative expectations based on rumor and misconception; in need of accurate information.	Level of Incest Literacy
M24: There are times when she really feels in love and other times it's just - "Here I am" - it doesn't really bother me - I'm not offended or anything - I don't feel that it's my fault -	Sexual relationship affected by mood swings; not taking her reaction personally; does not feel personally rejected or responsible.	Systemic Influence
M25: We're pretty good friends - we talk about everything - I need to know how things are and how I stand and how we stand - undecided things I don't like - I'm not one of these guys who can just sit back and say "we'll see what happens" - I kind of want an answer now, or at least be working towards one, and be at peace - I kind of like to know what's happening.	Experiences trust and openness and caring in the relationship in general; needs to know the meaning of her actions in terms of where he stands; aware of limits on his tolerance for ambiguity.	Recognizes His Needs
M26: If it stayed the way it is right now - I'd hope it would become a bit better - I kind of think of a relationship as a growing type thing - I kind of expect things to grow between us and get more comfortable.	Experiences the relationship as including potential for learning and growing; expects improvements to continue; optimistic for the future; sees problems as temporary.	Expression of Commitment

M27: That's one thing I liked - she told me early enough in the relationship about what happened to her so that I could have an out if I wanted to. There was another girl I was dating about the same time - and wasn't serious with either of them then. This other girl was real friendly, and the kind that would be a little homemaker and real happy to do things for you - it's not like she's a pushover or anything - she's a very nice girl- but I kind of thought (______) was the one for me - so I kind of knew what I was getting into.	Survivor's self-awareness and honesty has allowed him the freedom to make realistic, informed choices; he has taken responsibility for his being in the relationship and appreciates the fact that he was not manipulated.	Expression of Commitment
M28: I've seen how she can be and how she wants to be and as long as I can see that I feel better about it.	His investment in the relationship is justified in view of the potential for satisfaction.	Connection to the Survivor
M29: It's really sad that things like that can happen. And to realize that it really can affect people that deeply - and the victim is the one who ends up paying the price.	Appreciating the realities of the impact of incest.	Level of Incest Literacy
M30: I've had a few serious type relationships - and I've always drawn troubled type of girls - very nice, very troubled - I don't know, I just attract those type of girls - I don't try to. Maybe they feel that they need someone like me - they need to feel loved - feel safe - maybe I was attracted to them first - a troubled type of girl - maybe I could sense something - that they needed me - someone they could trust.	Recognizing a pattern in his relationships; recognizes a connection between himself and women who have been abused; contemplating possible explanations for the connection.	Self-Reflection
M31: I don't want to sound like Joe-great or anything - but - I think everyone goes through things - I've gone through things and come out alright - so I feel like I would rather be the one to carry that, and let her have the peace.	Does not feel identified with polarities of "victim" and "rescuer"; feels suffering is a part of life; feeling compassion for someone who essentially represents part of himself.	Connection to the Survivor

Table 5

Higher Order Thematic Description of Michael's Experience

Thematic Clusters	Generalized Descriptions
1. Connection to the Survivor (Excerpts from Table 3: 28, 31)	Deliberate choice of this woman over other options; recognizes that the survivor represents opportunity for a vital, growing relationship; although he has been sympathetic to other abused women in the past, this person made him want to "be there" for her; faith in her ability to overcome effects of incest.
2. Onset of Conflict (7)	Aware of survivor's fear of getting "too serious"; nonetheless, frustrated by the survivor's ambivalent behavior.
3. Level of Incest Literacy (23, 29)	Originally experienced fear based on misconception; increased awareness through support group, of the realities of incest.
4. Sense of Bewilderment (5)	Sense of confusion; intellectual appreciation of the fact that the survivor has reasons for her behavior do not enable the partner to make sense of contradictory behavior; not aware of the defensive dynamics of incest survivors; taking personally her attempts to control her space.
5. Yo-yo Syndrome (6, 8)	Experiencing the "flip-flop" from acceptance to rejection, the mood swings; feeling pushed and pulled without any apparent cause from the partner.
6. Relationship to Offender (12, 14)	Feelings of anger and aggression toward the offender; wanting to neutralize the present threat of the offender in the family; dealing with in-laws around the topic of confrontation.
7. Systemic Influence (9, 13, 24)	Experiences inability to concentrate on non-relationship issues; concern for safety of nieces affects relationship with in-laws; sexual relationship is affected.
8. Self-Care (20)	Aware of his tendency to be influenced by feelings, and his need to maintain equilibrim for himself in the face of his wife's fluctuating emotions.
9. Ability to Cope (3, 16, 19, 21)	Learning not to be controlled by mood swings; able to anticipate changes in emotional temperature; with recognition of patterns comes freedom from responsibility for causing them; does not feel manipulated; recognizes tendency to "do something" but can allow the survivor her autonomy.

10. Effect on Self-Image (11)	Feeling that unwillingness to make the sacrifices required by the relationship would render him unworthy of the potential rewards of this or any other relationship.
11. Sense of Responsibility (15, 22)	Taking it upon himself to protect both his wife and the relationship should the situation become extreme; realizing that ultimately he does not have "the solution."
12. Expression of Commitment (10, 26, 27)	Intellectually assessing his reasons for staying in the relationship; expecting the person to grow and the problem to diminish; willing to support the survivor in her struggle given that she is taking over-all responsibility for herself; appreciating that he is an integral part of her healing process; trusts in the survivor's demonstrated ability to take risks in relating openly; appreciates and accepts the element of risk present in a growth-oriented relationship.
13. Negative Nature of the Experience (17)	Identifying the experience as painful on the basis his own ability to empathize, his need for comfort and reassurance, and in having to resist the temptation to rescue his wife.
14. Search for Understanding (1, 2)	Attempting to gain some perspective on the survivor's behavior; interpreting the survivor's behavior on the basis of his experience.
15. Self-Reflection (30)	Aware of the presence of a pattern which connects his life with that of abused women; speculating on the nature of that connection.
16. Recognizing His Needs (4, 18, 25)	Values his connection with "feminine" qualities of tenderness and intimacy; aware that he experiences those qualities with/through his wife; does not need to control as much as be included in the process; aware of need for acceptance and belonging; low tolerance for ambiguity.

Michael's Experience

Michael was dating two girls at the time, neither very seriously. The other one was "a great little housekeeper, and the kind that would be happy to do things for you. Not a pushover by any means...," but he felt somehow that there was "more going on" with H. Michael was aware of her history and felt that he "kind of knew what he was getting in to" when they decided to get married.

Relationships to Michael are "kind of a learning, growing thing." This approach characterizes his relationship with his wife. Having been good company for himself before becoming involved, Michael usually feels he has the balance and emotional resources to provide support for his wife when she needs it, even if it is in the form of "letting her know I love her and go do what needs to be done." He is not particularly identified with her being an incest victim, or even a survivor, but sees them as having to work out the kind of issues confronting other married couples. It's just that some of their issues do relate to incest, and a desire to understand and work with these issues is a major focus in their relationship.

Even with the amount of work that H. had done for herself in resolving the effects of her incest, Michael still found that "she didn't like to be controlled, at all." Before being married he encountered a characteristic approach/avoidance pattern from the survivor that had him wondering, sometimes from one day to the next "What does this mean?...we're not going to get married?...we're falling apart?...what does this mean?" Having been warned of this defensive action, and availed himself of information and support in the form of a partner's group, Michael had some context from which to understand her actions, but intellectual understanding does not always ease the daily experience. Michael realizes his need for companionship and affection. He "likes cuddly type stuff in front of the TV" and understanding does not make him miss her less when "she can be quite hostile and withdraw and spend time in her room." Although Michael describes himself as "an emotional kind of guy" he behaves like a thinker and has learned "not to let her up's and down's pull me up and down." He is aware now that "things kind of flip-flop. When things are great, they're great and sometimes there's distance there and I feel it," but thinks he's "getting smarter I guess. With every up or down I can foresee the opposite coming down the road."

Even though Michael has recognized and extricated himself to a degree, from his wife's coping patterns, the legacy of the incest has still found its way into other areas of his life. Before learning anything about incest he had fears of his wife possibly abusing their future children. He feels his marriage is basically secure and will continue to grow but his ability to accomplish anything is compromised when things between them are unsettled. Michael is "not the kind of guy who can just sit back and say 'we'll see what happens'. I kind of need to know how I stand and how we stand...and be at peace."

He is aware that his wife sometimes has difficulty responding sexually. "Sometimes she's really in love and other times it's just - here I am. I'm not offended or anything. I don't feel like it's my fault." His degree of self-worth usually prevents him from reacting personally to his wife's struggle to change her defensive habits.

The presence of the offender in his wife's immediate family, and the fact that the offender has young daughters creates a moral issue for Michael and his wife and those other family members who are aware of the offender's activities. The prospect of someday having to protect his own children from a close relative means that even though he and his wife may one day have a marriage made in heaven, they will be dealing with incest-related issues from now on. Michael still faces the question of how to deal with the offender in person. His emotional side, neatly packaged by his easy-going, rational manner "didn't know if I wanted to meet him, but I wanted to kill him sometimes. You sure don't feel like shaking his hand, unless you follow it with a good knee or something."

Michael does not usually think of himself as particularly victimized by his wife's past abuse or her present behavior. He tends to couch his descriptions more in terms of learning, and take a pro-active rather than reactive stance. He nevertheless expressed appreciation for the fact that something that happened a long time ago to someone else is having a major impact on his life.

A picture starts to emerge of a man who has negotiated his way through the world with considerable powers of observation and a supportive, facilitating manner. His position relative to the survivor is not one of paternalistic protectiveness - he does not project his sensitivity onto her and then own his feelings through her. Instead he has recognized and married the woman with whom he is safe in sharing his own vulnerability. That vulnerability extends to realizing that "I can't say the right thing all the time either." At times his ability to separate himself from her pain fails: "She'll comfort me y'know - say 'Don't worry, I know I'll come out the other end.' But it's kind of hard to stand by and watch this." He realizes he is not perfect and does not expect perfection of his wife. "If I was to get up and say forget it and leave - let someone else take care of you - I don't feel I would be worthy of anything else really."

His sense of responsibility is expressed in his learning to cope for himself with the effects of his wife's struggle. It is extended to her only when he contemplates behavioral extremes mentioned by other group members - "One of the other guy's wife told him to get out and he did. I can't just leave - what if she slashed her wrists or something?" He realizes that as much as he would like to, he cannot take this struggle away from his wife. "You always want to get in there and do something and make it better, but in actuality you just have to kind of ride it out and let her feel down..."

Michael is dependent on his wife, for another soul with whom to share his own. This is not the dependency of confusing one's identity with another. He is not totally self-sufficient or immune to loneliness. Neither is he a saint, or a missionary. "I felt that lots of times - I don't need this and I don't want this either." But he knew she was struggling to learn to trust, and that she had taken a risk in opening up to the degree that she had with him. He has seen "how she can be and how she wants to be...and that there was love there."

They took a long time getting to know each other - going to movies, "sitting and talking for hours and just laughing it up, never laying a hand on her." He feels they are "pretty good friends" and is allied with his wife against patterns which have exerted tremendous pressure on her. He is committed to being with her while she changes those patterns.

Michael and his wife are not experiencing the negative extreme of behaviors that can result from childhood incest, in part because she is already "coming out the other end" of her healing process. Even though they are hopeful, and do not experience major disruptions in their relationship, Michael must still confront his own fears and loneliness, allow his wife her own struggle and accept the remnants of her experience into his picture of the future.

Robert

Personal and Relationship Background

Robert is the oldest of four brother who grew up in "your average family." When they are together the family spend a lot of time outdoors fishing and camping. He is on good terms with his brothers and his parents who live in British Columbia. His employer is subsidizing him in an electronics course to upgrade his skills. Robert describes himself as "not much of a talker," but when he does speak it is in highly charged, descriptive metaphors.

Robert and his wife were in high school when they met on a blind date and "It was love at first sight for me, and for her too, I guess." They were married as soon as they were out of high school (nine years ago) since his wife was pregnant. Robert said he used to feel that she used him to get out of her house, but he doesn't feel that way anymore. He does feel that he never had a chance to do "half of what he wanted to do - never had a chance to grow up."

Robert feels his wife is smarter than he is in some ways and "does extremely well as a wife and a mother." He describes their marriage as having been "kind of a rocky road." The couple has been separated and reconciled in the past. They had been seeing a marriage counselor for several weeks at the time of the interview. Robert admits to being "deathly afraid" of the counselors. He says he's afraid they will "tell me I'm a crackpot or something." He goes because his wife gave him an ultimatum, "and then you have to do something." He is willing to "give it a year and if that doesn't work, that's it."

The couple have two children, one of whom has recently been diagnosed as epileptic. Robert sees their life as "getting more complicated every day."

Excerpts from Robert's transcript follow.

Table 6

Thematic Abstractions of Robert's Experience

Excerpts from Transcribed Interview	Two Levels of Abstraction 1. Paraphrases	2. Themes
R1: When we were goin' out together, I found out - not much I could do about it, but I did tell her father if I ever catch him touchin' any of the girls I'd kill him.	Feeling helpless to change the past; anger and aggression toward the offender; taking responsibility for protecting his wife and her sisters in the future.	Relationship to Offender
R2: Sometimes she's very passionate, there are times she doesn't like anything to do with you.	Feeling pushed away or pulled toward his wife on an inconsistent basis.	Yo-Yo Syndrome
R3. I figure that - my body revolts her. She doesn't want anything to do with me.	Feeling unlovable, rejected, physically repulsive.	Distanced by Survivor
R4: It's very frustrating - but we're trying to work it out.	Attempting to work through a very difficult situation.	Expression of Commitment
R5: She's very moody - one minute she can be happy as a lark - the next minute she hates the world. I can understand that.	Can make some sense of her behavior from the standpoint of her past.	Search for Understanding
R6: -it's been a bit of a rocky road.	Experiencing fatigue from his struggle; negative metaphor.	Negative Nature of the Experience
R7: I don't think she really enjoys sex at all. She says she does, but I see no proof of that. I need it. And she'll say she likes cuddling and petting, but she won't do it. She sits in the rocking chair and I'll say come over here - and she won't. She'll say - "Oh, Yeah, I will in a minute - the minute never comes.	Expresses need for sexual relationship; receiving mixed messages; frustrated by lack of clear communication.	Recognizing His Needs
R8: I feel rejected. Again - as if she doesn't want anything to do with me.	Experiencing being physically rejected by his wife; being identified with the offender.	Distanced by the Survivor
R9: She says she loves me - and I think she does. I believe it - I've been hangin' in for a while - I love her - or I wouldn't be around.	Expresses faith in the loving basis of the relationship; experiences this bond as his reason for staying in the relationship.	Connection to the Survivor

R10: I bought her a car and never even got a thank you. 'Cause she figured I was going to hold it over her head. I don't know - that I just can't figure out - 'cause I haven't done anything to her to make her feel that way - actually I can't figure that out at all.	Confused by his wife enacting old patterns; unaware that he is being identified with the offender; feels unjustly punished.	Sense of Bewilderment
R11: It's very discouraging. I try to provide a good living for her but, she sometimes she doesn't - I don't think she feels I do her anything.	Effectively rendered powerless to make a connection or have any impact on his wife; does not feel seen or appreciated by her.	Distanced by Survivor
R12: As far as the sexual relationship goes - it's just about non-existent.	Sexual relationship is seriously affected; symbolic of general lack of communication.	Systemic Influence
R13: What do I have to hold together? My life, I guess...face the world...have a face I can show the world instead of how I actually feel. I've done a pretty good job of that.	Aware of repressing genuine feelings; fear and denial of possible Self-Image outcomes; feels compelled to present image of competence to the world.	Effect on Self-Image
R14: - it's really tough - but as I said - if I didn't love her I wouldn't be around.	Experiences his attachment to his wife as the reason for staying in the relationship.	Connection to Survivor
R15: I've told her I love her I don't know how many times - she's always asking me when she's really down - "why do you put up with me - why do you stick around"? And that's what I tell her. And she's forever saying I'd be better off without her and everything else, eh? It's crazy - she figures she's doing me a favor by doing that - she's not.	Perceives his wife as pushing him away; is not being received or heard by her; appreciates possible explanations for his wife's behavior; does not feel his devotion is seen or understood.	Distanced by Survivor
R16. She does extremely well. She's an excellent homemaker, mother, and a wife. And if she got the monkey off her back she'd excel.	Perceives the woman separately from the victim; appreciates the possibilities for her growth; frustrated that he cannot relate to this side of her more often.	Connection to the Survivor
R17: If I could just get it out of her mind that I'm the enemy.	Being identifying with the offender; feeling excluded on that basis. on that basis.	Distanced by the Survivor
R18: This has been going on for nine years - up and down and up and down - at each other's necks.	Experiences the relationship as a constant unstable struggle.	Negative Nature of the Experience
R19: When she gets in the mood she needs someone -that's the up part. That lasts for two, maybe three days, then it's back to the same old grind. This last bouts been going on for about a month.	Feels useful for a short time and then rejected; experiences enough contact to keep his expectations alive; feels subject to her moods.	Yo-Yo Syndrome

R20: The biggest problem it creates is loneliness.	Feeling emotionally separated from his wife.	Fear of Abandonment
R21: I don't push it - because I know she doesn't want to talk about it and it's hard for me because she's off in her own little world.	Respects his wife's need for boundaries; is unable to nourish himself emotionally when separated from her.	Fear of Abandonment
R22: Ask her what's wrong and she says nothing. Meanwhile she looks like she's ready to kill someone. That's what I get all the time - "nothing's wrong".	Perceiving mixed messages; frustrated and invalidated by lack of clear communication.	Distanced by the Survivor
R23: I've basically stopped prodding and pushing and just let be. Sometimes that eases things up between us - other times it's just as if I don't exist.	Reluctant acceptance of her control over the degree of contact; feeling invisible in terms of gaining his wife's attention and powerless to influence the situation.	Secondary Victimization
R24: I haven't done any reading on it - basically because every time I think about it I want to go over and kill her father. So I try to keep as far away from it as possible.	Denying himself assistance and information in order to avoid issues and feelings of anger and powerlessness.	Ability to Cope
R25: My guts just start boiling every time I think about it.	Awareness of impact of conflict on his body.	Systemic Influence
R26: About all you can do is try to stay on an even keel and ride it out. I just go outside and work on one of the cars for a while.	Sees separation as his only option for dealing with the emotional upheaval and surviving the experience.	Ability to Cope
R27: We just hit it off - met her on a blind date - it was love at first sight on my part - and I guess her's too.	Experienced an instantaneous connection with his wife; makes assumptions about her feelings.	Connection to Survivor
R28: We don't associate with her family at all - we've wiped her family pretty well off the face of the earth.	Totally disassociated from wife's family.	Systemic Influence
R29: Sometimes I feel like the black widow spider - as soon as you mate you're dead.	Sees seemingly hopeless, powerless position in terms of graphic negative metaphor.	Secondary Victimization
R30: It's more of a maze - sometimes you don't know whether you're comin' or goin'.	Experiences lack of autonomy and inability to make sense of his position.	Sense of Bewilderment

R31: There are days I just want to get in the truck and take off - but, I won't do that till the last dog's hung.	Tempted to give up, but is committed to giving the relationship every chance before exercising that option; prefers not to see himself as a quitter.	Expression of Commitment
R32: Yeah - and I'm getting a little tired of getting up and feeling like someone's kicked me in the guts - just about every day.	Perceives himself as abused; sees his resolve as weakening.	Secondary Victimization
R33: I ask myself "what'd I do to deserve this?" But life goes on.	Questions the meaning of the experience on the philosophical basis that he is somehow responsible; expresses a resigned acceptance of the situation.	Search for Understanding

Table 7

Higher Order Thematic Description of Robert's Experience

Thematic Clusters	Generalized Descriptions
1. Connection to the Survivor (Excerpts From Table 5: 9, 14, 16, 27)	Expresses strong attachment to his wife; sees "love at first sight" as basis for staying in the relationship; aware of her positive qualities; connection revolves mainly around roles.
2. Sense of Bewilderment (10, 30)	Confused by the survivor's identifying him with the offender; does not perceive any connection between his actions and her reactions; interpretation on the basis of assumption replaces open communication and sponsors perpetual misconceptions; has no information to give him a perspective on their dynamics as a couple; his logic is invalidated leaving him no sense of direction.
3. Yo-yo Syndrome (2, 19)	Perceives the survivor's fluctuating sexual desire as his own desirability; experiences alternating acceptance and rejection from the survivor on an inconsistent basis.
4. Relationship to Offender (1)	Expresses anger and aggression toward offender; transfers much of his frustration with the relationship onto the offender.
5. Secondary Victimization (23, 29, 32)	Experiences being controlled, feeling powerless and invisible; uses graphic negative images to convey sense of hopelessness and feelings of being abused.
6. Systemic Influence (12, 25, 28)	Experiences repercussions in several areas of his life: sexual relationship as seriously compromised; expresses physical symptoms of stress; relationship with survivor's family is terminated.
7. Distanced by the Survivor (3, 8, 11, 15, 17, 22)	Experiences being generally disqualified and held at a distance by the survivor: feels responsible for her rejection of his body, his gifts, his role as breadwinner; feels identified with the offender by the survivor; perceives her conflicting body language and verbal messages as attempts to exclude him; perceives her lack of self-esteem and inability to receive love as intentional rejection of his devotion.
8. Ability to Cope (24, 26)	Sees avoidance as his only option for dealing with the issues; denies himself useful information in the interest of preserving an illusion of being in control; maintaining tasks in a different physical area provides defense against feeling excluded.

9. Fear of Abandonment (20, 21)	Feeling rejected while he attempts to respect his wife's need for boundaries; unable to nourish himself emotionally; dependent on his wife for acceptance and warmth.
10. Effect on Self-Image (13)	Aware of preserving self-esteem at the cost of authenticity; identified with "masculine" role of competence and endurance; security and self-worth threatened by contemplation of possible negative outcomes.
11. Expression of Commitment (4, 31)	Genuinely values his wife and the marriage and prefers to exhaust all options before giving up; desires relief more than escape.
12. Negative Nature of the Experience (6, 18)	Characterizes experience as generally difficult, barren and combative.
13. Recognizes His Needs (7)	Expresses his desire for a sexual relationship as well as closeness and affection; sees sexuality as the main carrier of acceptance and security and warmth.
14. Search for Understanding (5, 33)	Attributes responsibility to the past rather than to the survivor for her confusing behavior; attempts to find a meaningful connection between his actions and his immediate world; accepts his involvement as "fate".

Robert's Experience

The first thing that came to Robert's mind in describing his experience as the partner of an incest survivor was that there "was nothing I could do about it. But I did tell her father if I ever catch him touchin' one of the girls, I'd kill him." This same helplessness and anger largely comprise his assessment of his experience. Since the beginning, "love at first sight" on a blind date, Robert has been swept by a current of events over which he feels he has no influence, much less control.

Robert's connection to his wife demonstrates the power of the classical *anima* projection. He needs her as a vehicle to live his emotional life, and attributes his "feminine" feeling side to a woman whom he admires but with whom he cannot communicate. Having rescued her from a family "that would make a great soap opera" there was no time to become friends before becoming teenage parents.

Robert knew his father-in-law "raped all the girls" nine years ago, when he married L. He said the topic would come up between him and his wife now and then but the couple never really talked about it. He can't read about it because it makes his "guts boil" every time he thinks about it, so he "stays as far away from it as he can." He can't stay nearly far enough away because the results assault him regularly. Robert described a pattern of interaction fraught with assumptions, mixed messages, role expectations and assorted variations of power struggle scenarios.

Robert finds his attempts to please his wife, demonstrate good faith or earn her trust are met with suspicion, be it "trying to make her a good living," a gift of a new car which "I never even got a 'thank you' for because she thought I would hold it over her head" or an innocent hug in front of the children. As a result he feels unable to reach her in any way. He is totally nonplussed by these reactions since he feels he has never done anything to deserve them. He said he got mad once and put his fist through a wall, but that just made more work, so he doesn't do that any more. He finds his father-in-laws actions abhorrent and incomprehensible and takes pride in never letting his frustration become abusive toward his wife. He focuses much of his anger on her family and on "life."

Robert feels intimately connected to his wife but expresses their relationship in terms of role expectations - he is a good provider and she is a good homemaker, wife and mother. Since neither he or his wife have been ready to tackle the issue of incest directly, (incest and the offender are blamed in general for most of their problems), they have no context from which to approach their dynamics. The result is a self-perpetuating cycle of misunderstanding and disappointment - opportunities to approach each other become layers of rejection. Her low self-esteem asks him why he would stick around anyway. His need for a feminine counterpart says it because he loves her. She responds that he'd be better off without her. She "figures she's doing me a favor by doing that: She's not." He doesn't feel released, he feels banished to outer space.

Robert feels like "my body revolts her." But sometimes she's very passionate, "when she's in the mood she needs someone, that's the up part. That lasts for a few days, then it's back to the same old grind." Lack of any sexual expression between them is a major issue for Robert. Robert tends to deal with the world in predominantly concrete terms, so it is not surprising that physical contact is his primary avenue for expression of affection and acceptance.

Without the ability to discriminate one's own feelings or the rudiments of genuine communication, Robert lives in a state of emotional abandonment while being tied to the motto of the traditional male role - "No problem".

Robert is aware of the paradox in his position. He lives up to his role expectations but feels further from his goals. He holds his life together by having "a face I can show the world, rather than what I really feel," and knows that the very act of showing that face makes his real feelings more painfully clear.

Robert's coping strategy has been to physically withdraw - to go outside and work on one of the cars. It helps him "stay on an even keel and ride it out." He has learned that it is counterproductive, most of the time, to ask what's wrong. The answer is usually evasive. He tries to respect her space "because I know she doesn't want to talk about it." Unable to nourish himself emotionally, "leaving her alone" leaves him profoundly alone.

Robert talks about his life to no one. Her parents are well aware of the abuse but Robert and his wife have "pretty well wiped them off the face of the earth." His parents are supportive but far away. Men in his (our?) world do not seek support from each other in such matters because it is "not okay" for them to confront each other with such vulnerability.

Robert can connect his wife's moods and her sexual reluctance to her past abuse. He does not hold her responsible for what he sees as the results of another's actions. He knows she is capable of being more. There are times she's "just like a normal woman." He encourages her to go to school. He is frustrated that he cannot separate himself from the offender in her eyes. "If I could just get it out of her mind that I'm the enemy." At this point, without outside assistance, he cannot avoid taking personally responses intended for the offender. Each one adds to his accumulating storehouse of rejections and helplessness.

Robert's sense of powerlessness is dramatized by his graphic image of his fate. "Sometimes I feel like a black widow spider - as soon as you mate you're dead." The image suggests a creature driven by honest instinct into a situation where the outcome for both of them is decided by dynamics which are bigger than both of them.

It is a matter of honor for Robert not to give up. That choice at least he sees as his. "I've been hangin' in for a while - I love her - or I wouldn't be around." At the same time he appreciates his limits. "There are days I just want to get in the truck and take off, but I won't do that until the last dog's hung."

Robert and his wife have bought into the stock contract with life which says "if you follow the roles, everything will work out." They are finding the contract has not only failed to account for a great many contingencies, but cut off their access to redress. They may be able, with the help of therapy, to negotiate the gap between scrapping the old contract and designing a new one.

Greg

Personal and Relationship Background

Greg and his two brothers grew up in Montreal in what he describes as an "very affectionate" French, Catholic home. In his early thirties now, he has pretty well transcended the Catholic imperatives in his background but still feels there is "a spiritual something out there. What it is, I'm not exactly sure."

Greg was married for a few years when he was in his early twenties. He says "We were young and we thought we knew everything...we kind of grew apart...had different priorities." They had an amicable separation and remained friends for several years after the divorce. He describes most of his subsequent relationships as "uncomplicated" and characterized by "a great deal of affection."

Greg has worked in sales for a number of years which has afforded him a good living. This is important to him not only because he enjoys the material benefits but because he values the opportunity to "experience everything."

Greg describes himself as a romantic but behaves like a realist. He believes passion is an important ingredient in a strong relationship, but approaches a problem as "something to be solved." He is of the opinion that fears are to be challenged and overcome. He gains a great deal of satisfaction and a strong sense of personal worth from being able to say "I did it - I can do it!" Another of Greg's philosophical positions is that people create their own lives. "If you are a good person - good will come to you. Everybody starts the same and everybody goes out the same...whatever you make of what's in between is going to happen." This statement takes on more significance coming from a man whose life for the past several years has given him a significant amount of pain from which to "make" something.

Self-reliance is a major tenet in his belief structure. "If I need something who's gonna give it to me? I don't want to be in that position where I need something and I can't get it. So I look after myself...if I don't nobody will."

Greg has been living for the past several years with S., an incest survivor. He would like to be married, "have roots, and a family" but she is not ready. He was engaged when they met to a "very attractive lady" but felt something was missing. His relationship with S. has been "stormy from the start," but Greg thinks "we could be awesome together." S. has attended survivor's group sessions and is now in private therapy. Greg has seen her therapist "a couple of times to get things off my chest and find out what the hell is going on." He does not feel he needs therapy at the moment but would be interested in a partner's support group. He has obviously given a great deal of thought to his experience as a partner of an incest survivor and was a willing and articulate participant.

Excerpts from Greg's transcript follow.

Table 8

Thematic Abstractions of Greg's Experience

Excerpts from Transcribed Interview	Two Levels of Abstraction 1. Paraphrases	2. Themes
G1. When I was thinking about coming for the interview, I think I was thinking more of myself...realizing I wasn't alone.	Realizing he has been feeling very separate from other people regarding this experience.	Isolation
G2. Everybody sees us as the ideal couple, and I think I'm scared to shatter the illusion. Maybe this is what I have left to hold on to.	Holding on to the vision of the perfect couple, represents holding on to the possibility of a healthy relationship.	Ability to Cope
G3. And I was also having a tough time dealing with it myself.	Experiencing difficulty dealing with this experience.	Ability to Cope
G4. It seems that she was getting all the help - and everything was directed towards her - I felt maybe left out, weird in a sense or alone.	Feeling excluded from the survivor's healing process; feeling that he is expected to deal with his problems on his own.	Isolation
G5. When we first got together everything was perfect, your regular dating type of pattern. We started getting more involved, more intense, and the problems started.	Early expectations of an ideal relationship; aware of a sudden change in direction with the growth of intimacy.	Onset of Conflict
G6. All the male figures she's trusted before in the past have let her down. I can see the point where she shuts me off that way. But she trusts me and she knows I'm gonna be there, I've been there so far this long - I've stuck by her - why would I let you down now? I think she should be opening up more to me rather than closing me off. But it seems it's the opposite.	Feeling his logic and his loyalty being invalidated; lack of understanding of the survivor's fear of intimacy; confused by unexpected and hurtful responses to his commitment.	Sense of Bewilderment
G7. I've had ample opportunities to let her down, - to leave - I mean I could have taken the simple way out and said I don't need all this - this crap, and just walked out. But I've stuck by it.	Aware of choosing, numerous times, to remain in a difficult relationship.	Expression of Commitment
G8. I just saw her walk into the room through the front door and I just said "that's it!" and she looked at me and I looked at her and it was something there, like I knew all about her and she felt the same way about me, like it was destined to be.	Instantaneous recognition of something familiar in the survivor; experiencing a reciprocal sense of identity with each other.	Connection to the Survivor

G9. (laughing) - I often ask myself that question - I really don't know why I stay. And then I think - once she comes through this I think everything will be alright. And we'll have a good strong relationship because we'll have lived through something like this and survived.	Questions his reasons for staying but is optimistic that he will ultimately enjoy a special, strong relationship; sees the problems as temporary.	Connection to the Survivor
G10. It's affected me an awful lot - I'm not the same person I was two or three years ago.	Sees himself as very much changed by his involvement with the survivor.	Effect on Self-Image
G11. I'm emotionally drained.	Negative effect on emotional reserves.	Systemic Influence
G12. I feel like my life has been in abeyance for the last two or three years. It's been put on hold.	Energy has been diverted from his own life; feels suspended in time.	Secondary Victimization
G13. I don't have the ambition I used to have. 'Cause it's constantly on my mind - I'm constantly thinking about it - day in and day out.	Perceives the issue permeating his whole life; sees it as pervasive, persistent stress.	Systemic Influence
G14. I got big shoulders but I can only take so much. It hurts - it hurts a lot, and you can only take so much.	Sees himself as capable but not inexhaustible; realizes there are limits to what he can tolerate.	Effect on Self-Image
G15. I really can't talk to anybody about this. I can't talk to any of my friends about this.	Experiencing the shame of "keeping the secret".	Systemic Influence
G16. She's very vulnerable, and I don't want to see her hurt again - so maybe I'm trying to protect her - I don't know - I'd like to see her come through this - I'd like to be with her.	Places a high value on her well-being and on her presence in his life.	Connection with the Survivor
G17. And it's frustrating - extremely frustrating. There's no intimacy, there's no love, there's no emotion - there's a lot of emotion, but not love emotion - affection - that is awfully lacking.	Unable to meet his need for intimace and affection; dependent on her for these qualities in his life.	Recognizes His Needs
G18. - and now it's (sex) just non-existent. And to me that's frustrating. Very frustrating - especially when we live together - 'cause we sleep together and everything else. We still snuggle and hold each other - but that's it - that's as far - if I try anything else it's pffft - forget it - the barrier comes up.	He must pace his sexual expression to hers; finds this demands great great patience; experiences the survivor as controlling their sexual expression.	Systemic Influence

G19. I've learned a hell of a lot. I've read some of the books the doctor has given her to read.	He has taken it upon himself to learn about the impact of incest.	Level of Incest Literacy
G20. I don't do as good a job at work any more as I used too - I don't feel as excited.	Work is another area of his life that is negatively affected.	Systemic Influence
G21. Sometimes I look forward to going to work - just so that I can - whew - get away and leave all that behind.	Sometimes he is able to let go and feel some relief at work.	Self-Care
G22. I have so many plans - I'm not getting any younger and there's things I wanna do - things I wanna plan for - and if this goes on for another couple of years and turns out it's a dead end, nothin', then I've wasted five years of my life.	Confronting the possible loss of the relationship, of time and goals which he sees as fulfilling.	Search for Understanding
G23. She is deeper - There's things she wants to do and things she wants to explore and to find out about and to learn about - which is what I like. I like doing different things - I like exploring - I like finding out about things and taking everything in. My other girl, she used to follow my coat-tails.	He appreciates her for herself as well as for her meaning in his life; appreciates her self-directedness and the fact that she does not seem to live through him.	Connection to the Survivor
G24. She just exploded right thru the roof and I just sat there blown away - I couldn't believe it. Just the aggression and everything that came pouring out - I couldn't believe it - and I didn't know what the hell was going on. I couldn't figure it out.	Totally confused and overwhelmed by powerful negative emotion; unable to integrate this behavior with his perception of who she is.	Sense of Bewilderment
G25. I feel unloved - rejected.	Suffering from a lack of support, communication and clarification.	Distanced by the Survivor
G26. Yeah - there is some bitterness I guess.	His is not expressing his anger directly.	Secondary Victimization
G27. What keeps me sane is - I have all these great fantasies all these great plans for what to do again - I role play in my mind.	He finds ways to keep his own dreams alive and give some meaning to his sacrifice.	Ability to Cope
G28. It's to the point now where - do I want to take this road and spend the next few days, months, years - living through hell or do I want to take this road - nice easy package and no complications or anything.	He is constantly confronted with evaluating his choices and actions; awareness of options.	Search for Understanding

G29. Last year - I'd be scared to go out because I'd be afraid of what I'd do - I might pack it in - maybe have an affair or something - I couldn't do that - If I did that - I think in my mind's eye - that would be it - it's either all the way or nothing.	Realizing that he is making choices; turning down other opportunities in favor of his commitment.	Expression of Commitment
G30. I'm not saying I crave it (sex) and I have to have it or I'm going to go out and have an affair or anything like that, but I do miss now and then the occasional deep-meaning hug.	Sexuality is not the issue so much as the lack of emotional connection with the survivor; discriminating between sex and intimacy.	Recognizes His Needs
G31. I don't know - I think about it all the time - which way do I go - what do I do - What am I doing here?	Trying to find some meaning in his actions; feeling his way in unfamiliar territory.	Search for Understanding
G32. I don't want anybody to know - I don't anybody know why - my parents don't know - her parents don't know.	Keeping the secret affects relationships with both families.	Systemic Influence
G33. Well, her mother knows what happened - but they don't know an iota of what it's really like to live with - or what's really going on - she thinks "Well, this happened back then - and S. has a tough time dealing with it" - and that's it - and there's a hell of a lot more to it than that - and she hasn't got a clue. Nobody knows.	Feeling that no one else is capable of appreciating his experience; unable to go to any of his immediate circle for support.	Isolation
G34. What bothers me the most is that her uncle (a minister) has no idea of the problem he's caused. And lately I've been thinking when I see him I'm going to pull him off to the side and just sit him down and say "Listen, buddy, this is what's happened."	Anger at the injustice of the offencer not having to take responsibility for his actions; feeling violated by the offender; resisting the unspoken injunction to remain silent.	Relationship to Offender
G35. I guess it's the macho image - chauvinism - I don't want to leave myself vulnerable and open - to pity - I can handle it.	Aware of his conditioning; identifying with the hero rather than accepting his human limitations.	Effect on Self-Image
G36. I felt good about coming up here - just to let somebody know how I feel. It's always been like I was on my own deserted island.	Reaching out for a chance to explore his vulnerability in safety; relieved to have company.	Isolation
G37. We used to go out quite a bit - dinners - parties -movies - operas - Fringe -concerts - I've been in a couple plays - bicycle up and down the river valley - shoot pool - don't do any of that any more - don't work out any more - lot of things I don't do any more.	Social life and outside activities have been curtailed.	Systemic Influence

G38. I've taken up fishing. I think it's because I enjoy the peace and quiet. That's the only peace I had last summer, my own time to do my own thing. I really enjoyed that.	Finding some separation from the intense focus on the survivor; meeting his own needs.	Self-Care
G39. Sometimes I just wallow in my own self pity. I tend to do that.	Monitors his feelings; allows himself to not have the answers all the time.	Ability to Cope
G40. I saw that maybe I'm not as strong as I thought I was.	Aware that he (and heros) can also be vulnerable.	Effect on Self-Image
G41. I've been so busy walking through obstacles and over them and around them, trying to do things not to upset her and to please her and do this and do that and try and stay out of her way.	Trying to fix, change, cure, manage the survivor and her problems.	Sense of Responsibility
G42. I've always been in control emotionally. Once I lost control. I just didn't know what to do - I wasn't in control - and I just lost it and I broke down and I've never ever broke down like that in my life - and it scared me.	Discovering vulnerabilities and seeing himself in ways that challenge his identity; incorporating previously rejected attributes of his personality.	Effect on Self-Image
G43. I felt so empty afterwards - it was incredible. Like nothing - I could have just rolled over and died - absolutely nothing - she told me - she said "that's how I felt. A lot of times."	Experiencing the void at the edge of understanding; feeling totally powerless; experiencing the survivor's world.	Secondary Victimization
G44. Sometimes she feels more like my sister than my wife or my lover or whatever.	Experiencing the absence of a sexual connection.	Distanced by the Survivor
G45. Sometimes I wonder if there's any light at the end of the tunnel. So what I do now is I take it one day at a time - you have to.	Living in the present instead of the future; accepting the reality of the unknown.	Ability to Cope
G46. I wish I knew - If I could have a time - six months, eight months, two years - OK, great - I know for the next year and a half - whatever - this is what I gotta do and I can see light at the end of it, but it could be anything.	Has no idea what to expect; uncertainty makes it impossible to marshall his resources; he has no choice but to accept the unknown.	Search for Understanding

Table 9

Higher Order Thematic Description of Greg's Experience

Thematic Clusters	Generalized Descriptions
1. Connection to the Survivor (8, 9, 16, 23)	Instantaneous feeling of familiarity; sees potential for this particular relationship to be personally fulfilling rather than satisfy demands of collective social role; genuine concern for the survivor's well-being; preference for the survivor over other possible partners.
2. Onset of Conflict (5)	Experienced "the perfect" relationship for several months after meeting; with increased familiarity the partner experiences confusion at the survivor's "sudden" flight from intimacy.
3. Level of Incest Literacy (19)	Taken responsibility for seeing the survivor's therapist for clarification and obtaining information.
4. Sense of Bewilderment (6, 24)	Realizes that the survivor might initially approach him with wariness based on her past experience; unable to make sense of her continued inability to trust according to his logic; completely overwhelmed by strength of survivor's emotional reactions; partner experiences emotional intensity as threatening foreign territory.
5. Relationship to Offender (34)	Desire to "hold his hand to the fire" and make the offender accountable for the results with which the partner must now cope; does not feel intimidated by the offender; championing validation for the survivor.
6. Secondary Victimization (12, 26, 43)	Life as he had envisioned it is being controlled instead by the effects of someone else's actions; experiences his life as "suspended"; unable to express his feeling, especially negative ones, directly; pushed beyond what he is able to integrate; experiences the survivor's world of total powerlessness.
7. Systemic Influence (11, 13, 15, 18, 20, 32, 37)	Feels an emotional and physical energy drain from being too identified with the survivor's problems; this over-identification saps energy from relationships with friends and family; difficulty accepting total control of sexual expression by the survivor; work performance is compromised by absorption is relationship issues; focus on survivor replaces interests and activities.
8. Distanced by the Survivor (25, 44)	Feels nullified, not received, excluded from the warmth and completeness perceived early in the relationship.

9. Self-Care (21, 38)	Able to disengage without feeling guilty; allows himself to feel relief from relationship pressures in work; able to share genuine feelings in a "safe" environment; allows himself time and space in the outdoors to restore personal equilibrium.
10. Ability to Cope (2, 3, 27, 39, 45)	Attempts to maintain balance in the relationship and give meaning to his sacrifices by holding the vision of the potential in the relationship; exercising his romantic side in fantasy about possibilities for the future; accedes to the unknown the power over its secrets; allows himself to be down sometimes; attempts to live realistically, "one day at a time".
11. Isolation (1, 4, 33, 36)	Saw himself as having to "handle it" alone; felt excluded from the efforts taken on behalf of the survivor - treated like an onlooker; unable to share feelings and concerns with or seek support from family or friends; suspected that no one else could understand his situation; felt like he was "on his own deserted island";
12. Effect on Self-Image (10, 14, 35, 40, 42)	Sees himself as having changed over the course of the relationship; equates seeing the problem as insurmountable with compromising his masculinity; sees himself as capable of seeing the task through to a successful resolution; willing to acknowledge vulnerability; aware of limitations on his ability to be in control.
13. Sense of Responsibility (41)	Feeling responsible for doing "the right thing" to fix the problem; approaching the situation as a problem to be managed.
14. Expression of Commitment (7, 29)	Aware that there is an easy way out if he wants it; aware that he has chosen not to take opportunities to end the relationship or betray the survivor's trust; mature willingness to risk and make sacrifices for the potential long term gain.
15. Search for Understanding (22, 28, 31, 46)	Faced with constant assessment of personal values; frequent evaluation of choice to remain in the relationship; need to find a personal meaning in the relationship.
16. Recognizes His Needs (17, 30)	Recognizes need for intimacy and acceptance and affection is stronger than need for sex; misses warm physical contact.

Greg's Experience

Greg sees himself as a "do it!" sort of guy. Not that everything is easy, but he doesn't believe in being "bounced around by this thing and that thing." Basically he is in control, even, if necessary, of strategic retreat. He believes in goals and workable positions.

His relationship with S. looks like both. When he saw her walk in the front door, he looked at her and she looked at him and he said "Ah, that's it!"
It was like they already "knew everything" about each other. Being together was not a decision - it seemed as if it had always been that way. Greg honors that "knowing" side of himself. It tells him where to go and the realist in him figures out how to get there. Greg sees his relationship with S. as an integral part of the journey.

When they were first together, for the first six months or so, the journey was "perfect, your regular dating type of pattern. We started getting more involved, more intense, and the problems started." They were already living together and would fight over stupid little things, over everything. After one catastrophic blow-up the story of the abuse came out. After that the intimacy which had seemed so easy became rare. Since then Greg feels like "his life has been put on hold" -

the journey toward their goals temporarily suspended. He couldn't understand why she couldn't trust him when he had had so many chances to leave or to cheat, and had stood by her. He couldn't comprehend the depth of anger and aggression she seemed to contain. He felt rejected, unloved, more like he was living with a sister.

Greg senses in S. potential for a genuine partnership based on sharing their excitement for doing and learning and exploring, unlike his previous relationship where "she used to follow my coat-tails." Greg also expressed simply "wanting her to come through this. I would like to be with her."

Greg is very much a part of the "masculine mystique" which includes the struggle for outward success (Silverberg, 1986). He has been conditioned to stand alone, and deal with the outer, not the inner world. Being in control is paramount. The conflicts engendered by incest (both in her and in him) are impervious to "control." Greg's feeling of his whole life "being in abeyance" is, for him, a natural reaction to a situation which defies management.

Greg has read the books about incest that S.'s doctor gave her. They have given him some understanding of the background of her actions. The books have not helped him cope with that inner world where he is vulnerable.

All of the fronts on which a man must be successful have been attacked. His woman is in control of their sex life. They sleep together, and "hold each other and cuddle, but that's it." It's not just sex that's missing, it's "no intimacy, no love." He would settle for the "occasional deep-meaning hug." He feels he is not as ambitious, he doesn't do as good a job at work because he's not as excited about it. He doesn't see friends and do all the fun things he used to do. Emotionally he is usually on empty. Her mother knows, but that's all. He feels "embarrassed." He, too, is "keeping the secret."

One of the things which bothers him the most is that "...her uncle has no idea of the problems he's caused. I've been thinking when I see him I'm going to pull him off to the side and just sit him down and say 'Listen buddy, this is what's happened...'." Greg insists he is not interested in revenge, and indeed he seems too practical for such a waste of time and energy, but one senses that Greg feels he is having to deal with the consequences of the uncle's actions, and he would like the offender to be made aware of that fact.

Greg's inner world is being very much disturbed by his relationship with the survivor. He says he "is not the same person" he was a few years ago. He can shine a bright light on what is happening and name his conflict.

"I guess it's the macho image - chauvinism - I don't want to leave myself vulnerable and open - to pity. I can handle it." There is none of the braggart in his claim, however. He was so busy "walking through obstacles and over them and around them, trying to do things not to upset her and to please her and do this and do that and try and stay out of her way." Eventually he "just lost it," lost control. He was pushed by his confusion and helplessness to the edge and over it, and tumbled into incredible emptiness, "like nothing - I could have rolled over and died - absolutely nothing." So when he says he can "handle it," it is with the knowledge that "maybe I'm not as strong as I thought I was. I have broad shoulders, but it hurts, a lot, and you can only take so much."

That might be okay if he didn't have so far to go and so many things to do. That gnawing feeling of "being on hold" is the stalemate between the culturally approved masculine drive to shape life and accomplish, and the (also culturally) denigrated capacity to give up power and control and accept what is.

Unable to embrace a state of active acceptance, Greg experiences himself as a victim, having no choice but to watch the days of his life sift by waiting for "her to get better." Because it is not allowed in the masculine code, Greg has not gone for help himself. His inability to find a safe outlet for his anger and frustration has necessarily turned him ever so slightly cynical and bitter. All the goals he had for his life are behind schedule. He knows he could go on without her. He thinks about it daily. "Do I take this road and spend the next few days, months, years, living through hell, or do I take this road - nice, easy package and no complications or anything." When do options become dead ends? When does going on without her mean leaving behind the reason for "going" anyplace. In his mind it's "either all the way or nothing."

Although he has yet to embrace "the middle path" that goes between the horns of the dilemma, Greg is somewhat able to separate himself from the negative energy vortex. He goes to work to experience the "relief - to get away from all that." He dreams and allows his fantasies of "what it will be like" and his image of "the perfect couple" he knows they can be, to give meaning to his suspended present. He feels the "once she comes through this...we'll have a strong relationship because we will have...survived." Greg has taken up fishing and canoeing, usually alone. He enjoys the "peace and quiet" and "doing his own thing." Sometimes he gives himself permission to just "wallow in my own self pity." When all else fails he "takes it one day at a time. You have to."

Shared Experience

The individual experiences of the four participants manifested twenty-one different themes. Table 10 describes these themes. The themes are listed in the order in which they appear in order to reflect the unfolding of the experience itself. Although all of the themes were not mentioned by all of the participants, only three themes were not verified by all of the participants as part of their experience (Nos. 12, 19 and 21; Table 10).

It is worthy of recalling that Michael felt he experienced a far less intense impact of the effects of incest than other men. In spite of this fact, Michael acknowledged experiencing all of the themes at some time in his relationship with the survivor.

Greg said that he was not "afraid of abandonment", but was actually preparing for the end of the relationship. Rather, he felt it would almost be a relief. He also felt that he had confirmed knowledge of himself but had not really learned anything new in the experience. He felt that the "self-reflection" theme did not apply to him. Greg also felt that he had lived up to a personal value system in remaining in the relationship thus far, but was not particularly "moving toward a personal value system."

Robert did not feel he knew himself any better as a result of the experience and could not concur with the theme of self-reflection. He also expressed always having felt like "people could take him the way he is or _____ on them," and did not experience moving toward a more personal stance.

David felt that "fear of abandonment" was the way he had lived all his life, and did not find it unique to this experience.

Other than these three themes, the participants concurred with the interpretation as presented.

The themes which were found to be common to all the men's experiences are further grouped into higher order clusters in Table 11. The numbers in Table 11 refer to the number of the theme in Table 10. These higher order themes are reflected in the more generalized outline of the experience of the participants. This generalized description follows Table 11.

Table 10

Definition of Themes

1. Connection to the Survivor: an instantaneous sense of knowing and being known by the survivor; a feeling that she is a part of him in a way that no other woman could be.

2. Onset of Conflict: that point in the relationship where intimacy becomes a threat to the survivor; the partner experiences a sudden reversal in behavior.

3. Yo-yo Syndrome: partner experiences approach/avoidance patterns in survivor's acceptance and rejection of his presence, sexual overtures, plans.

4. Sense of Bewilderment: the partner is confused by the survivor's seemingly irrational, unpredictable behavior; partner perceives the survivor's responses to be totally unconnected to his actions; apparent lack of communication.

5. Distanced by the Survivor: partner's sense of having no impact on, or recognition from the survivor; feeling invisible, rejected.

6. Systemic Influence: experiencing the stress related to long-term effects of incest spilling over into other areas of life such as work, health, friendships and family relationships.

7. Secondary Victimization: recognition that the partner also suffers the impact of the offender's actions; partner's reaction to violation of his life may resemble the survivor's reaction.

8. Relationship to Offender: position taken by the partner relative to the survivor's offender.

9. Level of Incest Literacy: the degree of education regarding incest which the partner can use to contextualize the survivor's behavior.

10. Self-Care: actions taken by the partner on his own behalf, self-nurturing by the partner.

11. Ability to Cope: strategies used by the partner to maintain equilibrium within the relationship; partner's perception of his ability to sustain stress.

12. Fear of Abandonment: inability to allow boundaries between the partner and the survivor; self-worth is dependent on attention from the survivor.

13. Effect on Self-Image: partner's self-concept is challenged by the demands of the relationship.

14. Sense of Responsibility: degree to which the partner feels he can or must resolve the problems in the relationship associated with incest; degree to which the partner is identified with cultural masculine mandate to be in control.

15. Expression of Commitment: intellectual reasons for staying in the relationship; degree to which partner expects to be involved.

16. Isolation: profound sense of separation between self and the world.

17. Negative Nature of the Experience: general quality of adjectives used to describe the partner's experience; partner's perception of the character of the experience relative to previous expectations.

18. Search for Understanding: partner's attempt to find logical reasons for survivor's behavior; partner's attempt to integrate the experience with his world-view; attempt to find some personal meaning in his involvement.

19. Self-Reflection: learnings about himself which the partner derived from the experience.

20. Recognizing His Needs: degree to which the partner is able to discriminate his requirements within the relationship.

21. Movement Towards Personal Value System: awareness of breaking away from cultural norms and expectations toward personal stance relative to the experience.

Table 11

Higher Abstraction of Clustered Common Themes

1. World-view Conditioned to Masculine Values (Nos. from Table 10)	13. Effect on Self-Image 14. Sense of Responsibility 17. Negative Nature of the Experience
2. Encounter With New Experience Which Challenges World-View	1. Connection to the Survivor 2. Onset of Conflict 4. Sense of Bewilderment 5. Distanced by the Survivor 8. Relationship to Offender
3. Shares\Powerless Aspects of the Survivor's Experience	3. Yo-yo Syndrome 6. Systemic Influence 7. Secondary Victimization 16. Isolation
4. Attempt to Integrate New Experience	9. Level of Incest Literacy 10. Self-Care 11. Ability to Cope 15. Expression of Commitment 18. Search For Understanding 20. Recognizing His Needs

A Composite Picture of A Partner's Experience

The experience of a partner of an incest survivor could be interpreted according to numerous perspectives. The issues of attachment and separation, for instance, are part of a developmental continuum faced by most individuals. The partner's experience could be interpreted in the context of his developmental stages, and that intepretation would be no less valid than a psychodynamic interpretation. The perspectives would simply be different. Just as an object can be approached from many directions, so too can an experience be seen from different angles.

The author is approaching the question of the partner's experience from the perspective of trying to understand *his* inner experience of living with an incest survivor. The interpretation is based on, among other things, the author's tendency to be supportive and ultimately facilitate a positive outcome for both members of the relationship. The purpose is to understand as much as possible of what he feels about his situation. To this end the author has found a psychodynamic framework most useful.

Even before encountering the survivor, the prospective partner sees himself in a particular type of relationship with the world. He has his own framework from which to interpret events. He has his own framework from which to interpret events. He has taken a position relative to his world. Since we are often only more or less aware of the details of the position we take in our world, much of it being in the form of internalized, non-verbal messages from our early environment, it is often only with the encountering of challenging events that we begin to become aware of preconceived assumptions about ourselves and the world. This phenomenon is evident in the type of reactions the partners have to the circumstances of their lives with the survivors. Michael's baseline approach seems to be "hang in there and grow together." For David, doing what seemed to be "the right thing" was most important. Robert feels like a victim - life controls him. Greg feels he can take the bull by the horns and make it go his way. This seems to be where the men stand when they first encounter the survivor.

Chapter One contained Stein's (1973) description of "the eye of the beholder" containing, figuratively, a mental template which caused the young herring gull to be attracted specifically to stimulus which corresponded to the template. One could extrapolate from that premise, that the partner of an incest survivor is drawn to her instead of to another woman because she corresponds to an inner image which the partner carries within himself. If he has had relationships with many women he may be aware of a pattern in his being involved with women who have been sexually abused. Michael noted this pattern when he commented that he "sometimes felt like a social worker." Couples seem to be unconsciously drawn to a meeting point where they both have to grow. This growth is the best possible outcome of an encounter with an experience which stretches the boundaries of one's previous world-view. It could be argued then, that the man who is attracted to, or by, violated women, is a man who is unknowingly preparing to enter into relationship with the wounded feminine aspects of his own psyche. Because it is a woman who has been violated in some way who is resonating with his inner feminine side, the experience of coming to terms with that relationship is not liable to be totally comfortable. The stretching of one's boundaries is usually an uncomfortable experience. Part of the discomfort comes from the discrepancy between the actual experience and the unmet expectations of the experience.

All of the partners describe feeling a powerful connection to the survivor. He feels seen and known and complete in her company. Phrases such as "love at first sight," and "Ah, that's it!" and "I kind of thought she was the one for me" express this sense of connection. The depth of this connection is critical to the partner's remaining in a relationship which is liable to test the very precepts by which he lives. The relationship initially is experienced as "ideal, perfect, everything was there." It is at the point where the partner is ready to acknowledge that he had found "the one" for him, and formally signify his commitment to that relationship, that he encounters in the survivor a sudden and confusing reversal in those very qualities of acceptance and closure which had inspired his commitment. Comments such as "Everything was perfect, for the first five or six months," and "she let me know she had this history of running when things got too serious" express this reversal. Although the feeling of a powerful connection, and the legendary "pre-marriage jitters" may exist to some degree in any relationship, in these cases the reversal in the level of intimacy is striking. The ensuing approach/avoidance pattern also becomes one of the dominant characteristics of the relationship. The partner finds that he is desirable or not, welcome in her company or not, according to her moods rather than because of his behavior. He begins to feel that the survivor can control him. He loves her. He wants to be with her. Her acts in ways that are intended to support her well-being and reassure her that "her will has authority." Yet he feels like the kid sister who is half the height of her big brother. The big brother can hold her away with his arm and, swing as she might, she cannot touch him. The partner may hearing from the survivor "she says she loves me and I believe her" on one day, and the next day hear "she thinks I'd be better off without her. She thinks she's doing me a favor by saying that." He may be accused of having ulterior motives, be confused with the offender in the survivor's mind, and feel patronized (e.g., "ask her what's wrong - she always says nothing, but she looks like she's ready to kill someone.") The partner is liable to feel personally affronted and responsible for this literal turn of events, and simultaneously at a complete loss to decipher or influence the situation.

To the degree that the partner is identified with pervasive cultural mandates for men to be in control, to deal with events and results, and maintain a "face (he) can show the world", he will begin to feel very bewildered and loose his emotional bearings. "What am I doing here?" may begin to spread from "what am I doing in this relationship" to " What am I doing in this life?" If the partner expresses the anger and resentment naturally arising from his confusion and frustration he may begin to suspect he is being abusive. Either expressing his negative feelings (within the relationship, as opposed to perhaps a counseling session) or repressing them seems to intensify the parther's level of stress. His ability to concentrate on issues other than the relationship will suffer. He will have less energy to put into his work, other friends and interests. He will feel "emotionally drained," or "not the same person I was two or three years ago." He will not only have to watch someone he loves suffer, be depressed or perhaps suicidal, but begin to suffer himself - "It hurts, it hurts a lot...."

The last part of the above quote is "...and you can only take so much." Men in our world are supposed to be successful - at everything. "Maybe it's the macho image" Greg said, "I can handle it." He didn't want to leave himself open to anyone's pity. He also "...found out I wasn't as strong as I thought I was." Whatever he finds, it is inevitable that the partner's image of himself will be altered by the experience. In fact, the experience of a partner of an incest survivor begin to correspond to the experience of the survivor herself.

The partner is liable to feel "ripped off" by the offender. By taking some degree of personhood from his victim the offender denies her caring partner a companion who can show her caring in return. The partner may feel controlled by the damage the offender has done to the survivors sexuality. Robert said "she says she like sex, but I see no proof of that. I think my body revolts her." Even if, as in David's case, sexuality is not a problem, intimacy is a problem. For Greg there were no "deep-meaning hugs." This lack of intimacy, and lack of ability to make sense of his position in the relationship, are some of the biggest burdens for the partner. "If I could only get it out of her mind that I'm the enemy" - Robert.

Whether or not the partner is able to seek help and information, he is liable to feel some degree of separation from his world as he knew it before engaging the survivor. Friends, if one can broach the subject at all, tend to tire of someone who keeps "putting up with this shit." Like the survivor who cannot speak of her experience, the partner feels profoundly alone. Other couples he knows don't seem to have these kind of problems. He feels too "embarrassed" to talk about it. Like the survivor, he feels shame at having been so wounded and so powerless.

At this point the partner has the opportunity to begin to create out of the confusion and disorientation a new context for himself.

The partner will be faced with ruthless examination of his reasons for wanting to stay in such a seemingly unsatisfying relationship. Besides "I love her," he will most likely feel that the potential exists for an exceptionally strong relationship. Michael also said he thought of his marriage as a "learning, growing thing." Greg made the comparison to "his last girl - she rode on my coat-tails." A man who remains the partner of an incest survivor is usually looking for a relationship which includes something more open-ended than the traditional marriage roles.

The partners in this study were committed to "all or nothing." Once that decision is made, he can begin to take care of himself, given the parameters of his circumstances. Expectations about the future such as desires for marriage and children or the fear of his spouse repeating her abusive past will create doubt and anxiety. He will be faced with fears of loss and loneliness. He may learn, as Michael did, that he can stay "off her roller-coaster." He may, as David did, "operate differently, see women differently." The partner may find ways to help the survivor restore the boundaries which tend to become confused in the grossly inappropriate bonding which occurs in incestuous relationships. Perhaps he will be confronted, as Robert was, with his own unresolved feelings of abandonment. Perhaps he will nourish himself a bit. Music, hunting and fishing, canoeing, sometimes talking with his spouse or just "doing what has to be done" have helped these partners to cope.

Most of the partners were interested in understanding as much as possible about their companion's issues. Even though Robert chose not to become acquainted with the literature on incest, it was an issue with which he was confronted. Recognizing his own needs and finding help and support in dealing with his frustrations are important ways of healing the issues incest brings up for him. Disentangling himself as much as possible from the survivor's issues, and allowing her to find her way through those, is a powerful signal to her that she is not a victim.

Uncertainty of outcome haunts the partner who has not "seen the light at the end of the tunnel," and is one of the most difficult aspects of this kind of relationship. It is at this point that the partner becomes aware of his approach to life. Being able to live with a degree of uncertainty, living as Greg said, "one day at a time," can be the beginning of an opening to more creative choice in life.

Whether developmental or psychodynamic in approach, the process of individuating involves a breaking away from a collective identity. The partner of an incest survivor who genuinely engages the experience will ultimately find himself clarifying the personal meaning he finds in his involvement with the survivor. He becomes better known to himself.

CHAPTER V

FINAL DISCUSSION

Beauty and the Beast

Myths have long been considered by some as road maps for navigating human experience (Campbell, 1972). Carl Jung (1964) used the tale of *Beauty and the Beast* to illustrate the female incest survivor's struggle to reclaim her ability to relate to a personal, physical love. Jung interprets the tale from the perspective of Beauty's resolution of an over-close, idealized, emotional relationship with her father which precludes erotic, personal love. The Beast is a prince who has been cursed with a grotesque animal body by a wicked sorceress. Little is said about the Beast's experience other than the fact that he will die of loneliness without her, and he must wait upon Beauty's awakening to her human, womanly love for him in order to be released from the enchantment. The Beast is the partner of an incest survivor. We will attempt to look here at the partner's experience as told by the beast.

Jung comments that "for a man, life is something to be taken by storm" (1964, p. 130). Beauty's heart cannot be stormed. The Beast has captured her, rescued her, met her every need and intuited her every wish with the hope that she will love him and free his true nature.

Some of the Beast's gifts are material - gowns and jewels and swans and magical books - and give Beauty physical pleasure. The partners in this study have likewise devoted themselves to making the survivors' world more pleasant. ("I do my best to make her a good living" said Robert). The Beast gave Beauty other gifts - patience, respect for her feelings and surrender to her wishes. "Your will shall be vested with authority" was the Beast's promise to her. "I've been so busy...doing things to please her and not to upset her" said Greg, in his attempt to earn the survivor's trust and assure her she would not be further invaded.

Beauty learns to trust and feel safe in the Beast's castle. When she looks at him, however, she sees only horror, much like the survivor who, sensing her partner's desire for her, projects upon his sensual love the curse-face of the Beast. (e.g., "I think my body revolts her...If I could only get it out of her mind that I'm the enemy" - Robert). The Beast feels his hopes and desires are foolish (e.g., "I am a stupid, horrible creature" Apy, 1983, p. 32). Bass and Davis (1988) quote one partner as feeling "like a real monster" because of his physical size, and beginning to believe that "all the frightening and injurious things about maleness were embodied in me" (p. 324). Beauty and her partner both struggle with shifting their focus from the monstrous to the human in a man.

It is the fate of the partner to learn to wait - to offer his best and surrender to the survivor's process of awakening. In the partner as in the Beast, this patience, this giving up of control, feels like torture, going against the partner's image of himself as a man, and the Beast's male animal tendency to "do." At one point in the story, the Beast comes into Beauty's room at night and stands over her while she sleeps. His Beast-claws are dripping with blood. The image captures the power of the Beast to do as he wishes with the girl, and the control with which he restrains that power. He knows his power cannot bring him what he needs, and he sacrifices it to the leisure of Beauty's waking. Later in the story even Beauty was aware that "certain forces obey him, others command him" (Apy, 1983, p. 56).

In Apy's (1983) retelling of Madame Le Prince de Beaumont's classic story, the Beast is neither passive nor a victim. After upbraiding her father for taking "something that was not given" (p. 13), he is active on his own behalf while recognizing the limits of his ability to control Beauty's response. He willingly surrenders all he has to Beauty, and asks of her only that she trust that his need for her is very great. He repeatedly asks if Beauty will marry him, but when she refuses he does nothing to force or manipulate her. We are not told how many other candidates there might have been before her. We sense though, that Beauty has special qualities which may enable him to transcend the outer beastliness and help him redeem the handsome prince within. The partner too, seems to sense something special for him in the survivor.

Beauty stays with the Beast and accepts his gifts and eventually offers her sincere friendship. She takes pleasure in dancing with him, awakening physically to "the skill of his movement, the strength of his grasp and the tenderness of his touch" (Apy, 1983, p. 44). However, she tells him that she cannot grant him his oft-repeated wish and become his wife. Partners share with the Beast his sadness and resignation at the pain of Beauty's rejection.

Beauty's heart is still very much with her father, and she wishes to return to him when he is ill. The Beast grants her wish, saying he will die of loneliness without her. Beauty is seduced into staying at her father's house longer than the agreed upon time. She has a dream in which the Beast is dying. It is only then that she realizes her true feelings for him. She is in love with the gentle Beast in spite of his appearance. She returns to him and the rewards of their joint transformation.

The story describes the progress of an awakening in the woman, to feelings that make it possible to break the bond with her father. The counterpoint in her partner is his surrender to Beauty's will, even if that means his doom. The partners in this study are at various stages of this story. For Robert, initial trust is yet to be established. For David, the curse of the sorceress won out. His "beauty" never sensed the prince within and he was not released. For Greg and Michael, Beauty has become aware of their partner's strength and skill and tenderness. The conflict that this awareness causes them is a hopeful sign of awakening. The survivors can receive a certain amount of intimacy without being threatened. (Readers may be interested in another myth explored by Young-Eisendrath (1984) which focuses on freeing the feminine in couples' relationships).

The story of *Beauty and the Beast* gives us one framework for understanding the underlying elements of the experiences of partners of incest survivors. The development of their relationship involves the partner taking back the "feminine" qualities of his own personality which he has projected onto his female companion, and thereby allowing her freedom to live *her* life.

Another way of outlining the experience of partners of incest survivors is in terms of the life issues it presents their partners. Yalom (1980) states that at some time in his life, every person will have "some traffic with existential ultimate concerns" (p. 16). One can imagine the Beast, and the partners struggling with these concerns while Beauty is yet "asleep."

While Beauty "Sleeps"

Death

Finally driven to his wits end, and the end of his ability to pretend to be in control, Greg acknowledges breaking down. (e.g., "I felt so empty afterwards...I could have just rolled over and died.") He characterizes his commitment as "all or nothing." Robert says that he won't leave "until the last dog' hung." The aura of death in the men's experience is represented to some degree in "the impossibility of further possibility" expressed by Heidegger in Yalom (p. 42). Just as the Beast promised Beauty he would die without her, the partners fear something in their lives will die should the survivors' human relatedness not "awake" from their incest-sponsored sleep. Greg expressed a sense of his life "being suspended" and asked the classic question "How long, Lord?" The men hope for change but must face the possibility that the relationship will remain as it is with the survivor in her own little world and the partner ranging the periphery. The hopes for a stable, normal relationship, with children and roots, are potential losses which touch on the fear of death. Yalom (1980) cites Freud as combining the loss of mother and the loss of phallus into the loss of love. The partner of an incest survivor is confronted with both these possibilities. His masculine potency is threatened by the survivor's refusal to engage him sexually. All the men in the present study described lack of affection from and companionship with their female partners. They also expressed a feeling of not being received at those times when the survivor had to withdraw to herself.

Under the circumstances, what can the Beast do?

Freedom

Both the Beast and the partner are confronted with the choice of what role to play in their dilemma. Responsibility is related to the co-constituency of people and their worlds. A person can choose how to see and relate to his or her environment and that environment in turn will influence his or her perception of that world. Just as Beauty can be a victim or a survivor, so her partner can choose to be a victim or a catalyst. The first choice is whether to stay or to go. Then the partner must decide how to handle his decision. Yalom (1980) speaks of the evaporation of previous structures - of rules, values and external reference points, - causing one to feel a void which must be filled with a new, more personally relevant structure. The rules and external referents which have governed relationships between the sexes have been crumbling. The void is being slowly replaced by a new valuing of what has been left out in the old structure - an appreciation for the process of awakening (Woodman, 1985). The partners need some perspective from which to understand their experience and that of their spouses, and what it requires of them. The previous structure of a masculine role model, that of a problem-solver and fixer and manager, does not begin to encompass the elements necessary for coping creatively with the effects of sexual abuse. Creating a new image of what it means to be male is the indicated task. Robert defends against this responsibility (e.g., "life won't let me do what I want.") Greg displaces his responsibility by thinking in terms of "when she gets better." He gives her the task of reconstruction.

The Beast shines some light on the confusion by his heroic acceptance of his vulnerability and need for help. This type of heroism stands in contrast to identification with the *Gilgamesh* type of hero who confronted enormous danger (the Gods themselves), but only as a means to escape another danger (the realization that he was partially responsible for his friend's death).

Yalom's "coefficient of adversity" (p. 272), or the amount of natural misfortune in our life, surrounds the partners in terms of the circumstances of their unique situation. This coefficient of adversity makes each one feel set apart or outside of the old, comfortable structure. Michael knows that "she'll probably never be completely over it." Greg feels like he's been "on his own deserted island." Yalom's point is, however, that circumstances, whatever they may be, never completely eliminate our ability to take a position relative to them. Frankl (1963) writes of the necessity and the ability men have for finding some degree of freedom from which to relate to crushing circumstances. The fatigue, guilt, risk and doubt which accompany the process of creating a personal stance based on internal rather than external referents, are graphically expressed by the partners.

Isolation

Yalom's three categories of isolation are experienced by the partners. If one considers Jung's theory of contrasexual elements in the personality (Sanford, 1980), then the feeling of not being in touch with the survivor emotionally or physically, is a reflection of the separateness of a man from his own *anima*, or inner feminine aspect. Intrapersonal isolation, or the partitioning of oneself (Yalom, 1980), almost resulted in the death of the Beast.

Yalom (1980) considers interpersonal isolation and existential loneliness to be very similar. All of the partners express this loneliness - "she doesn't want nothing to do with me," "there's a barrier between us," "I kind of miss those times." This aloneness focuses the partners on an emptiness in themselves. The emptiness reflects the lack of relationship with heretofore unknown and unacceptable parts of themselves. Existential aloneness is expressed by the participants in varying degrees, in the reluctance to commit to the less than perfect, the feeling of being different from other men, and the sense that when "she's in her own little world," I'm nowhere.

Resolution of issues arising from attachment and separation from parents are major developmental milestones for most human beings (Leibert & Wicks-Nelson, 1981; Pearce, 1977). The establishing of personal boundaries is one of the major tasks for the survivor recovering from the inappropriate bonding or disassociation of incest (Wooley and Vigilanti, 1984). Dealing with the survivor's attempts to determine her boundaries is one of the crucial themes in the partner's experience. Silverberg (1986) sees the roots of the partner's attachment/separation struggle in the cultural mandate which usually prematurely separates boys from their mothers. The early desire for attachment to a source of emotional nourishment is reenacted in adult relationships.

Meaning

"Why me, Lord? What did I do to deserve this? What does this mean?" It is the confusion, or the inability to make some sense or find some meaning in his experience which weighs heaviest on the partner. More threatening than deprivation of sex or friendship or future dreams, is the lack of an answer for "what is happening, and why." Analytically and existentially, the answer to this question lies in acceptance of the moment. What is happening is happening, and it is because it is.

Yalom discusses meaning in terms of "cosmic meaning," or "what is the purpose of life," versus "terrestrial meaning," or, "what is the purpose of *my* life" (1980, p. 423). The individual must find for himself a personally relevant or "terrestrial meaning" for his experience. Michael and Robert have found meanings for their respective situations as an opportunity for "learning and growing" on the one hand, and "life won't let me do what I want to do" on the other. David believed in "doing the right thing" as a broad base for giving meaning to his actions. Greg sees his goals as giving meaning to his life, and the involvement with the survivor as possibly threatening those goals.

The partners are in an organic relationship, not reducible to "a meaning." Yalom (1980) speaks of the unmasking of the meaning, or reasons behind activity beyond a certain point as reverting to a materialistic view of experience. The defining of actions as simply the results of certain drives or "reasons" is a reversion to a cause and effect dualism. Relationships place people in dynamic tension with each other. For the incest survivor, the presence of a partner whom she loves can be a powerful motivation to focus on painful issues and work toward their resolution (Maltz and Holman, 1987). The partner who can "stand the heat in the kitchen" has an opportunity to help create and enjoy a relationship described by David and Michael as "different, learning, growing" in which he and his companion "could be awesome together" (Greg).

Implications For Therapy

Yalom (1980) suggests that the basis of psychotherapy "always embraces the goal of unflinching self-exploration" (p.421). For the partner of an incest survivor, the ultimate issue is not "her" or the dynamics of the relationship, but self-exploration. The feelings of being a "monster," of perhaps (or actually) being an abuser, of impotence and anger and confusion basically revolve around the partner's conceptions of himself relative to his world.

Counselors need to be aware of the hurdle presented to many men in merely contemplating entry into therapy. Silverberg (1986) mentions issues for the male client deriving from the sex of the therapist. A female therapist may have to deal with being seen as a sex object. A male therapist may have to disclose his own vulnerability and educate his client in terms of an affective vocabulary. The client's fears of vulnerability and lack of control in the presence of a therapist of either sex may have to be dealt with before the specific questions which brought a man to therapy are explored.

Unlike women, men do not have cultural support for seeking help. Putting therapy on a business-like basis by creating a contract can ease resistance. Conjoint therapy with a counselor of each sex has also been a successful option. The therapist may need to allow the client to prove that he is "normal" and allow him a feeling of confidence in his treatment. It is probably not coincidental that these are some of the same issues the client faces in his relationship with the survivor.

One of the goals of therapy for client and therapist alike must be to examine role expectations around, for instance, men crying, and release some of the restrictions of those expectations. Whether therapy is approached from a psychodynamic, social learning or existential point of view, the acceptance of a new relationship with self and the world is called for.

While the focus of therapy, in one sense, must be on the partner and not the survivor and her past abuse as "the cause" of the partner's problems, he does face issues specific to the incest. The client must be allowed to voice resentment, frustration and anger without feeling that these emotions in themselves are abusive. He must be allowed to feel the legitimacy of his sexual desires without denigrating his maleness. He should be directed to information regarding the phenomenon of incest. Couple's therapy, or occasional participation of the survivor in sessions can be useful. It is important that the partner, like the survivor, know that he is not alone.

Implications for Future Research

This study focused on the lived-experience of four long-term male partners of female incest survivors. Their position as links in a chain reaction of negative repercussions of childhood incest affords them the opportunity to redirect some of the energy in that cycle and become catalysts for the survivor's healing. The partners are also confronted with opportunities for their own personal growth, particularly in their concepts of maleness and relationship.

Very little specific information is available to help partner's deal with the effects of incest in their lives. It is almost as if they are considered peripheral to the survivor's experience. Indeed, they express a feeling of being left out of her process. This is not to say that there has not been and is not now an urgent need for support and treatment of incest survivors. It is rather to acknowledge the opportunity that exists in having a supportive individual living with and committed to the survivor's (and ultimately his own) well-being. The survivor and her partner can provide each other with the motive, means and opportunity for breaking the cycle of abuse.

The pattern found in the partners' experiences includes being aligned with a cultural concept of maleness, being confronted with a situation which challenges that concept, and attempting to integrate new dimensions of their experience into a more flexible re-cognition of themselves as men, partners and people.

It is impossible for my interpretation of this experience to be entirely impersonal, and recognition of the experience by other partners is part of the process of validation. Further exploration of the degree to which both feminine and masculine qualities are denigrated in our culture, may be useful in helping men to realign both the fear of the feminine and the revulsion at "the Beast" in themselves. Study of the partner and the survivor as a couple would contribute to the resources available for many couple's who come to therapy without specific memories of sexual abuse to guide their treatment.

As was mentioned in the introduction, not all incest survivors are female, and not all partners are of the opposite sex. Bass and Davis (1988) assert that even though the issues between partner and survivor, regardless of sexual orientation, are more similar than different, lesbian couples involve another set of variables. Many incest survivors prefer lesbian relationships. Exploration of their particular issues could serve to maximize the partner's helping potential in those cases.

The interviews in this study were totally unstructured, allowing the partners complete control of the telling of their experience. Questions regarding personality types, efficacy of intervention, or specific aspects of the experience may be better served by more explicit formats.

Personal Comment

I have a close friend, a feminist incest survivor, who once commented on my ability to talk with men, to be their friend. That fact is perhaps both a source and a manifestation of a personal belief that ultimately, "we are all in this together." It is also connected to my sense of being a person who approaches the world primarily on a personal, "one to one" basis. One of my primary personal goals in writing this paper was to better understand my husband's experience of my healing process. I feel I have accomplished that purpose.

As a result of this study I am also much more aware of the preconceptions with which some men approach the demands of their worlds, and of the impact of those preconceptions on me, and on other women. I am more educated about my presuppositions regarding men. In view of my intent to work with women and couples in therapy, I am aware of my responsibility for not imposing those presuppositions on individuals.

Yalom (1980) expresses the belief that the primary goals of any therapist should be 1) to bring the client to a position from which he or she can make clearer choices, and 2) to satisfy Kaiser's one rule for therapists: "communicate" (1980, p. 406). The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (1981) defines "communicate" on one level as "to be connected or form a connecting passage." It is my hope that this exploration serves those goals.

EPILOGUE

After reading the interpretation of their transcripts the men had some closing comments.

David said that when he looked back on the experience he appreciated what he had learned. He said it sounded strange to hear himself say that, because there was "a fair bit of pain" at the time. He was nonetheless grateful for the experience. He also felt that he had not expressed how very important the volunteers and the support groups at the Sexual Assault Center had been in helping him deal with his confusion and change his attitudes. He is considering taking their volunteer training course and making himself available to other partners.

Michael says his marriage is becoming more stable. He feels optomistic about the future. Through his experience he says he has learned, among other things, to see people more as individuals and not so much "in a lump."

Robert and his wife have stopped seeing a counselor and are "trying it on their own." He says "nothing much has changed."

Greg is anticipating a breakup of his relationship. He sees S. as growing, and wanting to "make up for lost time" - without him. He is happy that she's healing, and a little bitter that he can't enjoy it with her.

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Appendix I

Transcribed Interview With Greg

K: Before you phoned me back, there must have been things that went through your mind.

G: Yeah - it's probably more positive things - I think I was thinking more of myself.

K: In what way?

G: Finding out - or, maybe realizing that I wasn't alone.

K: That was new to you - that there were others?

G: Maybe the way our relationship was going - everybody else I knew was happy-go-lucky, perfect, everything was going fine, no problems - nothing of this magnitude anyways. I found myself involved in it and didn't know if ah - well, she was having a tough time with it. And I was also having a tough time dealing with it myself. It seems that she was getting all the help - and everything was directed towards her - all the help and - I felt maybe left out - weird in a sense or alone possibly - I didn't know if I was alone in situations like this - or what to expect really - I've never dealt with anything like this before - so I didn't know what to expect - or what to think.

K: So - it's like - why am I here in this little black space by myself when all those other guys out there have got normal wives and normal lives?

G: Exactly, yeah.

K: So - what's wrong with me that I'm different.

G: Umhum, in a nutshell.

K: If you've never been involved in anything like this before, where do you think it came from? How did you get involved?

G: Well, I first met (------), and when we first got involved - everything was perfect, everything was ideal. Your regular dating type of routine or pattern, and everything was going well.

K: How long ago was that?

G: Just about three years ago now. And ah we started getting more involved - more intense, and the problems started.

K: What was it like when you were just dating?

G: We'd go out and do things - ah, all the time - fairly often, we were very spontaneous. There was no inhibitions, everything was like a typical, normal relationship - exploring, finding out about one another - and then once she grew comfortable with me and started trusting me more, that's when the problems started coming out. I finally understand that now, because of the help she's been getting - but to me it doesn't make much sense. I can understand it and I don't understand it. I can see the part about withdrawing - now that she's at the point where she can trust me - whereas all the male figures that she's trusted before in the past have let her down. I can see the point where she shuts me off that way.

K: To prevent you from letting her down too. I'll shut you down first before you can shut me down.

G: Possibly - but I think it's more - I trust you and I love you but everyone else that I've loved and trusted before has let me down so I can't show affection towards you. I've showed affection to these other people and they've let me down - so I guess possibly that's it - but I don't understand the part - to my way of thinking I think it should be opposite - she trusts me and she knows I'm gonna be there, I've been there so far this long - I've stuck by her - why would I let you down now? I think she should be opening up more to me rather than closing me off. But it seems it's the opposite -

K: So it's hard for you to understand - from her viewpoint the more she trusts, the more vulnerable she is.

G: Exactly...

K: ...and that's frightening...

G: Yeah...

K: ...because that's always been where she got hammered.

G: Exactly...

K: And from your standpoint it's well - you're having this good experience - you should be learning that this is OK.

G: That she can trust me, that she has trusted me and I won't let her down. Like I've had ample opportunities to let her down, - to leave - I mean I could have taken the simple way out and said I don't need all this - this crap, and just walked out. But I've stuck by it. It's cost me a few grey hairs, and a few other hairs.

K: Why do you stick by her...

G: (laughing) - I don't know - I often ask myself that question - I really don't know. And then I think - once she comes through this I think everything will be alright. And we'll have a good strong relationship because we'll have lived through something like this and survived. But I hope we can...

K: Do you wonder sometimes?

G: I wonder sometimes. I wonder every day actually - It's affected me an awful lot too - I'm not the same person I was two or three years ago.

K: How's that..

G: I'm emotionally drained. I feel like my life has been in abeyance for the last two or three years. It's been put on hold. I don't have the ambition I used to have. Cause it's constantly on my mind - I'm constantly thinking about it - day in and day out.

K; What do you think about? What happens when you're thinking about it?

G: Bits of everything - tension, stress - when she's on her ups and downs - when she's down - it can be hell when she used to come to these meetings on Wednesdays - Ha - Tuesdays were just incredible - every Tuesday we used to have a great big fight - she used to get so tense and so stressed out - and Wednesdays - you couldn't talk to her on Wednesdays - but after it was over it was like - ah, phhhh - big relief. Things would kind of relax Thursday, Friday - would be fine.

K: So you were kind of walking on eggs there..

G:... all the time, yeah. It's gotten better now, I'd say the past three or four months - we don't constantly bicker or fight at each other - we used to fight about an average of every third of fourth day it seemed - just battle about something - some stupid little thing - what to do, or what Steven would do - would just tick her off and she'd start on me - start giving me hell for something. And I'd just stand there and shake my head - what'd I do? She'd just let out all this aggression towards me. I got big shoulders but I can only take it so much - it hurts - it hurts a lot, and you can only take so much.

K: She focuses a lot of her dissatisfaction on you, and on her son.

G: Yeah - like her doctor said, it's - I've talked to him a couple times - and to get it off my chest, because I really can't talk to anybody about this. I can't talk to any of my friends about this.

K: Why not?

G: I don't know - embarrassed maybe -

K: You got the "bent" one...?

G: Well, I don't have the bent one - it's just a problem that just has to be worked out. My friends

- well my woman friends - one I probably could talk to, because she knows what (_______) would be going through - she's been here before, to the center. Well she doesn't even know - everybody sees us as the ideal couple. Y'know, and I think I'm scared to shatter the illusion. Maybe this is what I have to hold on to - and a touch of ego in there - but maybe this is what I have left to hold on to - everybody sees us as the perfect couple, and I picture that possibility in my mind and say it - Well, it is the perfect couple and it can be and it will be one day, but - it's not easy.

K: There must be something in there other than this picture-postcard-perfect future that you hold on to.

G: Yeah, she's vulnerable, very vulnerable - and I don't want to see her hurt again - so maybe I'm trying to protect her - I don't know - I'd like to see her come through this - I'd like to be with her. I can see her good points and her bad points. It's unfortunate that the bad points seem to be more predominant right now. But I know there's the good side of her - and that shines through every now and then - maybe it makes it all worthwhile - I don't know. It's tough - even now we talk back and forth - especially when I'm depressed and she's depressed - we're thinking of maybe living apart for a couple of months or so - just to see what it'd be like - and I was going to take her son and just give her time to get herself together and think about it and see how actually sure she is about me and how I really feel about her - and to see if maybe we should go on maybe tormenting each other for who knows how long - or exactly what. So, y'know it's more like the intimacy of it's not there either. And it's frustrating - extremely frustrating. There's no intimacy, there's no love, there's no emotion - there's a lot of emotion, but not love emotion - affection - that is awfully lacking - and that hurts - especially with my past relationships - they've all been - an awful lot of affection, and I miss it, and I'm not saying that I crave it and I have to have it or I'm going to go out and have an affair or anything like that, but I do miss every now and then the occasional - the deep-meaning hug, or the - there's something missing - we can sit on the couch and snuggle and watch TV but - there seems to be a barrier in between us and we both know what it is - and until this barrier comes down we can't do it - It wasn't there before when we first met. There was no barrier - it was nice and close - lots of intimacy there was everything - but ever since about five or six months after we started dating - ever since we started getting close together it just came up - and the intimacy part dropped off dramatically - and I didn't know why. And so I was trying to find out-and then all these things started cropping up and I started discovering more and more as to what was going on and why - and now it's just non-existent.

K: No sexual activity at all.

G: No, not for a long time. And to me that's frustrating. Very frustrating - especially when we live together - 'cause we sleep together and everything else - we still snuggle and hold each other - but that's it - that's as far - if I try anything else it's pffft - forget it - the barrier comes up and she freezes.

K: Do you talk about what's going on?

G: Oh, yeah, all the time - and she gets upset and she cries - and she says she can't she just absolutely can't - she freezes. And then I get frustrated. I've learned a hell of a lot. I've read some of the books the doctor has given her to read...it's so close. I mentioned one of my friends - she was involved, and ah, we talked an awful lot about it before I knew (_______), and how she felt, and it was always like - it's too bad it happened, and we'd sit there for the night and drink a bottle of wine and she was a really close, close friend and we'd just drink wine and she'd tell me all about it and she'd cry - and I could feel for her but, not so it would really affect me that much - not myself personally - but now that it has it's - I've come more in tune with (_____). She's like a couple years more advanced, through the process. And if I look at her and then at (_______) and I can see what's going to happen.

K: Do they seem to go through the same kind of things.

G: Yeah, almost - it almost seems not quite identical, but you can see the same pattern.

K: It seems hopeful for you then.

G: Well, yes in a way - but then, after she felt better about herself - and is in control of herself now - it seems like she went out and made up for lost time, and was quite promiscuous there for a while. Y'know she's settled down a little bit - she's settled down quite a lot - since then she's met somebody and they had a child and that together - so - and I look at that and it kind of frightens me in a way - I say - well maybe when (_______) gets better she'll want to go out and experience life a little - y'know - I thought about that too and I guess the only analogy I can come up with is I would feel like the person who supports a person through school and when that person graduates, leaves school, gets a job and pffft leaves that other person holding the bag - and in a way I feel like that - that might happen to me.

K: You've got a lot of expectations that might get handed right back to you -...

G: Yeah, exactly...like saying is it worth it to stick around if this is going to happen - I'm taking a big chance - and I'm constantly have all these scenarios going through my mind all day long.

K: What if's..

G: That's right - what if this, what if that... and I don't do as good a job at work any more as I used too - I don't feel as excited - but sometimes I look forward to going to work - just so that I can - whew - get away and leave all that behind. But ah, I have so many plans - I'm not getting any younger (33) and there's things I wanna do - things I wanna plan for - and if this goes on for another couple of years and turns out it's a dead end, nothin', then I've wasted five years of my life. Unfortunately these critical five years were - if I'm gonna do things I've gotta get 'em done now or else I'll never get a chance to do 'em.

K: Like what..

G: I want to have a family - I'd like to have my own child. All my friends now - their kids are two and three years old now - their growing up..

K: And how come you guys ain't havin' any kids...?

G: Yeah, right - although (_______)'s son is twelve now - but still - I haven't really had the experience of having - I'd really like that. I want to buy a house. We're renting right now - I want to settle down - I want to have roots - I want to grow - a family - I want your (everybody's) ideal type of relationship. I feel my life's been in abeyance for the past few years. Some things have been disappointing - went to Europe last year - the two of us - maybe I had too high of expectations as to what was going to happen - I'm an extremely romantic person - I love romance, and unfortunately she - she likes it but she can't deal with - can't get into it. I had planned on asking her to marry me in France and getting married in Italy - in some small little village - some small town - or something really romantic like that - and ah, unfortunately, things just didn't work out that way - It's probably the worst holiday we've ever had in our lives. It's just too bad - these things happen. That's a part that I miss too, the romance part. When I first met (_______) I was extremely romantic - I'd leave roses in the windshield of her car and take off and she'd get out of work and little things, I'd take the table out on the balcony and have a candlelit dinner outside at my place and just a whole bunch of little things - I'd phone her at work and ask her what she wanted for supper and she'd say nothing, so I'd spend the entire afternoon writing little "nothing" on pieces of paper and filling this plate full of "nothing" and serving it to her when she got home. Stupid little things y'know - but to me it was fun - I love doing things like that - and it's too bad...

K: Kind of shuts down the kid..

G: Yeah - I haven't really had any good fun in a long time - that hurts.
(tears)...

Later, a discussion about his previous marriage.

G: I guess we kind of grew apart - had different priorities - different things we wanted to do in life - although she was nineteen, I was twenty - everybody told us we were too young to get married - we knew what we wanted - knew it all - I was born and raised in Montreal - we got married in Montreal. About a year after we got married we moved out to Vancouver - and started a life in Vancouver. By the time I was twenty-three, I guess maybe I was a lot older than a lot of people - when I was twenty-three we had a house, we had three cars, we lived in suburbia - it was great - I had my little kingdom, my little empire growing around me - I had everything - playing the stock market, making lots of money - everything was great - then my little empire started crumbling around me. In a period of six months I got divorced, the company I was working for closed down. I had to sell our house and I moved to Edmonton. I'd never been to Edmonton before in my life - I got a job and got transferred to Edmonton - so - started from square one all over again.

K: What was your relationship with your wife like?

G: It was good - we were kids but it was good. We ah did a lot of things together - nothing really unusual. I guess as we started getting a little older she wanted to do certain things. I wanted to do other things. I guess I was obsessed with making money at the time - I wanted to retire at forty-five and the whole bit - and I was striving toward that - working really hard, doing really well. And ah, she wanted me home at five o'clock to spend time with her - and be with her and basically punch a clock - eight to four-thirty - but then too she wanted everything that went along with it - and I said you can't have both. We have a house and three cars and they have to be paid for and this and that and we take two vacations a year and this costs money - so maybe you gotta work for it. But she couldn't see the connection between the two.

K: So she felt like you were just neglecting her?

G: I guess so, in a way. When we got married we talked about having a family, and I really wanted a family - and ah so I guess I was twenty-four or so when I was ready to start a family, and she had changed her mind and actually did not want to have any kids and she was adamant about it too. So then I started thinking - and thought if I ever want to have kids I'm going to have to do something about it. So we had a long talk, and y'know it was an amicable separation and divorce so there were no fights, no problems or anything. We just split everything down the middle and shook hands and we still dated even after we were divorced and everything. We enjoyed each others' company. So, When I moved to Edmonton she came to visit me once and we sort of lost contact after that. I have heard that she remarried and she has a kid - so ...(Laughter). It's so ironic. Then I worked in Edmonton for a year - and didn't like the job I was at - wasn't what I really wanted to do - so I decided to travel to Europe for a year - so I packed my bags and took off to Europe. And it was probably the most wonderful thing I've ever done in my life. - I learned a lot - it opened my eyes an awful lot. I realized how fortunate we are - how lucky I am - how deprived a lot of the rest of the world are - even in the so-called Westernized or civilized countries over there - oh, it's beautiful - I appreciated a lot more the architecture, the art and everything - I met these two people over there - we travelled around a lot together - Kevin was about my age and his brother Dave was about twenty years old - young - and their parents were just filthy rich - so they travelled Europe every summer. And Dave really didn't really understand or appreciate what was over there - he just wanted to have a good time - but that's ok - I had a great time too, but I think I was more enriched after it was than he was, and came back - and bound and determined to start a new life - to start over. Get on with it - and I did - got a good job with a good company - making lots of money -when I got back I didn't really know what I was going to do - I always wanted to sell real estate - and so when I got back I talked to these people and fine - I'm going to sell real estate. Get at it and so on and so forth. And when I got back from Europe I didn't really have any money so I thought I'd just do something for a few months to get some money in the bank. So then I guess the word got around the (job) industry that I was back and in one afternoon I went from no job to five job offers. Made me feel really good. I was sales manager for this company and used to look after all the prairie provinces for them, and that went on for a few years, until about the time I met (________). And then times were tough for the industry and we had to close down this branch and the ones we had down in the states - so then I was out of work for about six months, and then I started working and (________) was out of a job for about six months - for the first year we were together we were both out of work. It was pretty tough livin' on one income. That's basically the start of our relationship - so it was stormy from the start I guess you could say. But as far as my other personal relationship go - the were ideal - or I guess you could say...

K:...uncomplicated?

G: Uncomplicated. Very uncomplicated. Actually I was engaged when I met (________). I don't know, we were at a party - my fiancee and I, and I just saw her walk into the room through the front door and I just said "Ah, that's it!" And she looked at me and I looked at her and it was something there - sort of like I knew her, like I knew all about her and she felt the same way about me and ever since - we just hit it off like that. Just like we felt so comfortable with each other as soon as we met each other - like it was destined - to be - and for the first while it was great. Then all these things started cropping up.

K: What do you think attracted you to her?

G: I guess when I first saw her it was her physical appearance - she's very striking. And I guess that was the first thing I noticed - and once we started - we had the same ideals, the same goals, we both wanted the same things.

K: Does she want to have a family?

G: She'd like to - she does and she doesn't...

K: Next life? When she gets this one over with...

G: Yeah...so, if that's ever going to come out of it I don't know. By then it might be too late.

K: Did you date a lot of girls - have you had a lot of relationships?

G: Yeah - I've had quite a few...

K: Is she different?

G: From the other girls I've dated? Well - Yeah. Laughter

K: Yeah - obviously...but do you see any kind of a pattern?

G: With the other girls I've dated? No not really - there doesn't seem to be a pattern - I've dated so many different kinds.

K: One of the guys I talked to said he started feeling like a social worker - he seemed to attract girls with problems - You don't see anything like that going on?

G: No - not really. I don't find that at all. This last girl - my fiance, she had a slight problem I guess but it was over real quick. Our relationship was pretty intense - it was - sexually it was great - it was probably the best relationship I ever had in that way - it was extremely satisfying - it was , but, I don't know what it was - there was something missing. I guess I really didn't love her. I don't know why - she was an attractive woman. I guess maybe what it was our ideals and ambitions were not the same. She was comfortable living in a small house and raising a family, and that's alright, but that's basically all she wanted out of life. I wanted more - I wanted to travel - I don't know - I guess I still am an ambitious type of person. Materially - ah, emotionally also.

K: So you want something happening.

G: Yeah -

K: Well- you sure got that! (laughing...)

G: Yeah I sure did!

K:...But that's important for you in a relationship -- to have some life there.

G: Well you have to have life!

K: Is that what's different in her from your other relationships - before it was the white picket fence and the cars and the two trips a year to Europe or whatever it was - but that's it. And (______) has got something going an a different level - she's much deeper than that.

G: She is deeper - like she wants to start her own business. There's things she wants to do and things she wants to explore and to find out about and to learn about. She's open - which is what I like - I like doing different things - I like exploring - I like finding out about things and taking everything in - My other girl, she used to follow my coat-tails. She was in a dead end job - and she knew it and she used to talk about getting out but she refused to do anything about it. She was happy there I guess. Well, she wasn't really happy, but she was comfortable I guess. I know that as soon as we got married she was planning on staying home and having a kid and that was it - she was staying at home. And I'm saying well yeah, for the first year or two and then put it in daycare and go back to work and pay off a house and start living. But no, she was content with a mortgage for twenty, thirty years and a nice simple life. And yeah to me a nice simple life, uncomplicated would be nice. But with something more to it - there was something missing I can't really put my finger on it - maybe it was a combination of things that was lacking. And when I first met (_______) all these things were there. And then this thing - pfft.

K: Where did "this thing" come into the picture?

G: About five or six months after. Basically it was sexually - it just went down hill, and we couldn't figure out why - and then the frequency went down to once a month and then down to once every three months - and she thought it was her and she was seeing a psychiatrist for a while and she felt self-conscious of her body and because she had her son she had a bit if a stomach and she figured that was it - and she kept on seeing this guy and he was a real quack - and she figured she wanted liposuction and wanted a dramatic change in her body - and y'know - it don't bother me - listen I'm ok - and then the fights started coming out and there was an awful lot of aggression -

over little things and I really didn't know why - and I guess what it started off with was last January we were at her parents place and her parents are Ukrainian and we were for the Ukrainian New Years and it just happened - Her son and I were sitting on the couch eating peanuts and watching TV and she had just finished vacuuming and we dropped a couple peanut shells on the carpet and she just went crazy - just exploded right through the roof and we both just sat there blown away - it was awful - I couldn't believe it. Just the aggression and everything that just came pouring out - I couldn't believe it - and then that was it - she just went into her room and slept for like - she slept for a day. And she refused to come out of her room - and I didn't know what the hell was going on. I couldn't figure it out and at that point I just about lost all hope. So I said look - you gotta get some help - quit seeing this guy you've been seeing - go see your GP - she has some knowledge of what's going on - So she went and talked to her GP, and ended up seeing this other psychiatrist who she's been seeing for about a year now. So, I can see some progress - maybe not as fast as I would like to see - but now I understand why all this pent up aggression used to come out and why it was coming out at me - and I had no idea why before but it came pouring out - so I understand why now - and I think what bothers me the most is that her uncle has no idea of the no problems he's caused. And lately I've been thinking when I see him I'm going to pull him off to the side and just sit him down and say listen buddy - this is what's happened - not for any idea of revenge - because I guess he's repented or something - he's a minister now in the Church or whatever - I've often thought about it - just let well enough alone, and who cares.

K: Do you see him often ?

G: Family occasions - weddings, off and on. He doesn't know I know anything. Maybe he doesn't even think (_______) knows, or remembers. I mean she was young - six, seven years old, and, her mother knows now. That was pretty tough for her to tell her mother cause it was her brother.

K: What's the relationship like with the mother since she told her?

G: Well, it helped in the sense that she felt better that her mother knew - she still feels that - she holds her parents responsible for what happened, in a sense because they weren't - well they're extremely nice people now, but from what I understand it wasn't an ideal family life - the had a lot of problems - they had a tough life too - five kids - young - lived in a mobile home for the longest time - he used to travel all over the province and be home every two or three months or whatever. So it wasn't very family - and it's since come out - there was little affection shown - the opposite to what my family life had been. (french) And she built up all this resentment inside of her. I know before we'd go up to her parents place and she'd spend the entire time house cleaning and as it turned out the reason why was because when she was younger she used to cook and clean for her brothers and she was the oldest and this was the only way she could gain approval from her parents, was this act of cleaning the house and it would just play on her - but she stopped that now - but now - she basically has very little use for her parents now - she doesn't care if she never sees them again. So - just for the record - I really like her parents. I mean, they're wonderful people now.

K: Do you have the impression that her mother really cares and supports her now?

G: Yeah - her mother really does. I don't know if she shows it - because I think probably she doesn't know how. They're really old-fashioned, country Ukrainian - I mean her mother's not Ukrainian - her father is - but they're from the o-o-old book. She works now but she stayed home with the kids. Speak when you're spoken too and be seen but not heard. (_______) had that type of upbringing.

K: When you were talking about the something that was missing that seems to be there with Shirley - it's really true that women who have had an incest experience - somehow they are very open - they have literally been opened as children - again even if it isn't sexual - something has been opened there - and part of the problem that you experience as her not wanting any sexual contact - is an attempt to be able to close. They can't close themselves - they have no sense of where they begin and somebody else starts - that's why they often seem to know your feelings better than you do - (Umhum) - but it's that being so open that on the one hand makes her so exciting - there's a lot of electricity going through her - but on the other hand - she can't turn it off either - there's no off button - so rejecting you is in a way an attempt to try and find an off button for herself - to be able to close herself off - which is sad because you experience it as her rejecting you.

G: Yeah - I do - I feel unloved - rejected -

K: You're working your ass off trying to support her and be there - so she can pound on you -

G: Yeah - basically it sort of like passing her the hammer to hit me with - y'know?

K: Owww - ouch ...

G: Yeah - really - it hurts! Yeah - but I guess I've grown used to it now - We'll go to bed and I have no expectations - I don't even try any more because I know if I do she'll get upset and I'll get upset - and why bother - and sometimes I think - well maybe - just maybe - but I think about it and nah - don't be stupid...

K: Is there a touch of bitterness creeping in there?

G: Yeah - I guess so - there is some bitterness I guess -

K: If the day ever comes are you going to take revenge and say no?

G: Are you Crazy? (laughter) No way!

K: OK - that's nice to hear - that's a brave man talking. You know - to stay open like that yourself.

G: She knows - I am very adaptable - I can adapt to almost any situation very quickly - that's one thing I can say about myself - I've adapted to so many situations almost overnight. I can live with it - I could move out and feel comfortable in my own place in a week - and it's my place or whatever - I adapted to this - and it's been a lot tougher than other situations - and she knows I still have all these feelings inside my body and I am what I am and if the time ever comes when she's open or receptive - right away I can start cutting another plate of nothings again - I can start doing those things again - y'know - I can be romantic like that again...

K: What keeps you sane?

G: What keeps me sane is - I have all these great fantasies all these great plans for what to do again - how to be romantic - what would really turn her on and different things - I role play in my mind - When I go to bed at night sometimes I think about different things and hopefully I dream about it - but if not - I have great ideas - if she's ever in tune or receptive I think she'll have a great time.

K: Are you seeing a counselor of any sort yourself?

G: Nope - I've talked to (________)'s twice - once briefly - another time for an hour or so - to get stuff off my chest - and to find out exactly what the hell is going on. Actually there's one thing that stands straight out - it bothers me actually - There's one thing that he said and if I think about it everything's kind of a blur - but this one thing - he said if you don't like it - leave - and it kind of took me by surprise - it was a shock - he said if I don't think I can handle it well leave - and I don't know - maybe I went with preconceived notions of what he was going to say or do or whatever - I kind of thought he understood that we loved each other and want to stick together and try and work things out - and he comes out and says there's an easy way out - go out the door. I just thought whoa - it wasn't what I was expecting at all. We have some commitment to each other.

K: So if you were to give it up - we're talking about death here - of a whole lot of future plans and dreams.

G: Possibly - but I'm sure I could probably find someone else to share them with - that doesn't have me worried -

K: So you're not hanging on because you're afraid to leave...

G: I don't think so...

K: So you've looked at the possibility of leaving...what that would cost you...

G: Oh, Yeah! Sure - when things got tough I sat down and had a budget all made out and everything else - everything. I know if I left I'd probably have to shut myself right off and forget about everything and start over - I've started over maybe three or four times in my life - from square one. Frankly, I'm getting tired of it - I don't want to start over again - I want to build on something - so - it's not easy - it's to the point now where - do I want to take this road and spend the next few days, months, years - living through hell or do I want to take this road - nice easy package and no complications or anything - maybe but dull - hard to say it's as dull as you make it I guess.

K: Do you have close men friends - are you close with any guys?

G: No - not for a while I guess. It's one thing that bothers me too I guess - I still have them - still talk to them on occasion - but I don't do things with them - I just don't feel like it - I feel so drained sometimes. I'm probably getting old too - I don't want to do the same things. And things have been better lately - the past couple months - at home there hasn't been as much aggression - things have toned down - things are levelling off - the peaks and valleys are not as dramatic and pointy - it's more like rolling hills - there still there - there's still the ups and downs - but last year - aw - I'd be scared to go out because I'd be afraid of what I'd do - I might pack it in - or say jeez I'm having a great time here - maybe have an affair or something -I couldn't do that - If I did that - I think in my mind's eye - that would be it -

K: ..we're not going halves here...

G: Right - it's either all the way or nothing. I don't know - I think about it all the time - which way do I go - what do I do...

K: What am I doing here...

G: EEExaaactly! But then I look at her and think aww.. well maaybee.. a diamond in the rough I guess.

K: What kind of questions or fears or apprehensions went through your mind when you thought about coming here?

G: Apprehensions - I guess - well, I never told anybody this before - what I told you - and maybe the fact that ah, I'll remain anonymous helped a lot - I don't want anybody to know - I don't know anybody why - my parents don't know - her parents don't know - well her mother knows what happened - but they don't know an iota of what it's really like to live with - or what's really going on - she thinks well this happened back then - and she has a tough time dealing with it - and that's it - and there's a hell of a lot more to it than that - and she hasn't got a clue - nobody knows - and I guess it's the macho image - chauvinism - I don't want to leave myself vulnerable and open - to the type of attacks or anything - pity - I can handle it. So if the point comes when we do split up and I leave - nobody's gonna know why - it'll just be we didn't get along. I felt good about coming up here - just to let somebody know how I feel.

K: So if there was a group of guys in your position would you care to be around them - or would it be too bad to let them know.

G: Never thought about it. I never knew there was a group of guys like that. It's always been like I was on my own deserted island. We used to go out quite a bit - dinners, theme dinner parties, movies, operas, Fringe, concerts. I've been in a couple plays. Bicycle up and down the river valley - shoot pool, don't do any of that any more - don't work out any more - lot of things I don't do any more. Sometimes I just wallow in my own self pity. I tend to do that. She would go out - she had to get out with her friends and I'd stay with her son - so for the longest time every Friday night would be our night - to get some coke and chips and make a bunch of popcorn and we'd sit and watch Dallas and Miami Vice together - yeah, me and the boys. I miss a lot of my friends. They'll all still be there. I know they're there. I've taken up fishing - I used to love to fish and I never really got a chance to do it - I mean I'd go out every now and then - but last summer I was out every weekend fishing - I used to go by myself or with a friend of mine, and I think it's because I love the peace and quiet - I love just sitting there on the dock - watching the sun come up - nature - throw my rod back in - go out in the canoe and paddle around the lake - wonderful - that's the only peace I had that last summer - the only time that was my time - my own time to do my own thing - I really enjoyed that. I even tried hunting for the first time this year. Actually it was exciting - thrilling - we never actually shot anything - we went after deer and moose - with three other guys I work with - they're extremely avid hunters - one of them's a guide - we had tags for just about everything - I'd never been hunting before - I'd always wanted the experience - so we went out north - right smack in the middle of this bush - little cabin - four walls and a propane heater - and it was fun - it was wonderful - I didn't shave for four or five days. Had one bottle of wine for supper time and bottle of Bailey's for our coffee at night - that was it for liquor -

and we went out early in the morning - dark - I came close to shooting a moose - out on the cutline - we'd take out turns on the line and go out and push the bush - I'd been sitting on the cutline - they'd been gone for about a half hour and were due to come back - and I heard this twig snap and all I saw this great big black thing standing right on the side of the bush - my eyes opened and I said oh no it's a moose so I got all ready and the moose stood there for a minute - minute and a half - looked around and moved out of the bush - I didn't see any horns - turned out to be a cow - so I just looked at it and watched it trot off - didn't shoot it - don't know if I could have if it'd been a male.

G: I look after myself emotionally. I ah, I've always been in control - once I lost control. Basically I just - lost it. I just didn't know what to do. I just phhfff - lost it - I just broke down - and I had never, ever done that before in my entire life. It just came out and I couldn't stop it, and I just couldn't believe it - after.

K: Did you see some things in it - or was it just a case of - Well, good, that's over now - let's get on with it?

G: Yeah - I saw that maybe I'm not as strong as I thought I was.

K: Is that ok? For you to need something too?

G: Yes and no. If I need something - who's gonna give it to me? Y'know - I don't want to be in that position where I need something and I can't get it. So I look after myself. If I don't nobody else will.

K: Have you done that always - all your life - or is that new?

G: Basically all my life. Well it happened New Year's Eve. Not that long ago. We were watching a movie - we decided to stay home this New Year's Eve - just the two of us. So we got a couple live lobsters - some escargot - big dinner plans - rented a movie - couple bottles of champagne - nice romantic dinner and we're watching the movie - just the two of us, and this love scene came on and I got up and walked away - in the kitchen to get something and she comes in and says what's wrong. I said nothing and she said why'd you leave and I just said I came in here to get something - and she just kept pushing, and pushing and pushing - why'd you leave - why, why, why! And we got into an argument, into a fight - and I was sitting in the kitchen and she was in the TV room - and here we are, New Year's Eve - y'know? Why? No sense in it. Why are we arguing - it should be a happy time - big dinner plan - it should have been perfect. I just don't understand. Then we argued some more and I just phhff and it turned out that I left because the scene bothered me - on TV. I didn't know what to do after that - I just broke down - what do I do - do I stay and let it bother me - do I go and get it out - I don't know - like I've been so busy walking through obstacles and over them and around them, trying to do things not to upset her and to please her and do this and do that and try and stay out of her way - I just didn't know what to do - I wasn't in control - and I just lost it and I broke down and I've never ever broke down like that in my life - and it scared me - it really did - maybe it's made me more defensive - I don't know - and I don't know if I like that or not. I really don't - and I felt so empty afterwards - it was incredible. Like nothing - I could have just rolled over and died - absolutely nothing.

K: She gave you a pretty good facsimile of her experience.

G: yeah

K: Did she know that - did you know that?

G: Oh yeah - she told me - she said "that's how I felt. A lot of times." And I guess another part that really bothers me, is if I'm facing a problem I say goddammit this is the problem and this is what I gotta do to correct it. So I do it! I know it's gonna hurt - I know it's gonna bother me - but godammit I do it. And OK, it's fine after a while. If I hate doing something I do it and do it and do it until I learn well, it's not so bad after all. Y'know try it once who knows - you might like it - but if you don't try it....

K: So you've always confronted your fears head on.

G: Well, personally, I believe you have to. If you don't you're just continually bouncing off stuff all the time. And you're bouncing off stuff here and bouncing off stuff there and you walk into a wall here and another one there - well goddammit sometimes you gotta walk through that wall! Just break you're way through and say-there - now I'm through. And you feel good about yourself after - you say yes! I did it! I can do it! And the second wall is easier to go through and the third one is even easier after that! - but that first wall - you've gotta try for that first wall - and I know it's tough. And you gotta do it...and I ah I could be all wet!

K: But it works for you...

G: It works for me. Unfortunately I don't see why it doesn't work for everybody else!!

K: Why shouldn't it work for everybody!

(Laughter...)

G: Yeah right!

K: ... and it doesn't work for her and you get pissed off about that.

G: Yeah, exactly. Especially with the sexual thing. Once she's involved in it it's no problem. I say well look - if a person just would for five minutes or ten minutes or whatever - ok - it might be tough - but nothing bad is happening to me - I'm not being hurt - it's making love - I love this man and he loves me and we're just showing our love, just expressing it - think about pleasant things or whatever, but she just can't get past that first step. And I just ahhahh - but I've learned to control myself now. We take showers together - we take baths together - and there's nothing (sexual). Sometimes she feels more like my sister than my wife or my lover or whatever. It hurts especially sometimes if I go out - go to a bar or whatever and look around and start talking to somebody or whatever - and think it could be so easy - I've come close - but I've become strong in that way - sure kick myself in the ass sometimes though. (laughter) Yeah - ya had it and ya blew it there...But no - the frustrating part - in the beginning it was extremely frustrating - it's not getting so bad now - that scares me in a way too.

K:... this could go on forever...

G: ..it could go on forever - and I'm sure I could still feel about it the same way but if when she's "all better" I don't know I might still feel the same passion - that's what I miss basically is the passion - I love passion - passion I think is great - there's got to be passion in a relationship - I believe to make it strong. You know, among other things - I'm just saying it's an ingredient - it's important - it's getting better now though - there isn't as much anger - she doesn't explode as often - but it's - there's still no passion - favorable passion between us - it's all negative. So sometimes I wonder if there's any light at the end of the tunnel. I've only got so many days left (in life). So what I do now is I take it one day at a time - you have to. And you look back and say shit - over seven hundred days have gone by already - that's a lot of days - is seven hundred more going to go-by or what? You know I'm constantly battling with that question - Do I take a chance and keep on going or do I pfht - it'd be so easy right now to just say pft and walk away from it all - who knows - she might be better - who knows, that might just give her the room she needs - to find herself - or discover her feelings or whatever - maybe it would be best for both of us - who knows - I don't know. I don't know - I'm in conflict with that - I don't know what to do again. Every day you face a new question - and what's the answer - that's what bothers me - I don't know the answer.

K: Hard for somebody who likes to be in control - who likes to sit down and figure out what to do.

G: See yeah in a way yeah it bothers me too because I never felt this way before - it's like she's casting off all this bad - all these negative things I guess - that she's getting rid of and I'm catching it - and I'm starting to live it.

K: Would you ever consider going for counseling yourself?

G: I don't think I need it right now - maybe I do - I don't know - maybe I'm really screwed up and I don't know it .

K: Do you feel like you're growing...

G: Sideways maybe - not up.

K: So there's no freedom...

G: No - right now I feel like my whole life's in abeyance - it's ended - any progress has stopped and anything that has happened is on this parallel line - nothing onwards and upwards and on to bigger and better things - and that bothers me too.

K: Are you a religious person at all?

G: Well - yes and no - well, I'm Catholic -I go to church on occasion - I haven't been for a while, although I've really felt the urge in the last six months or so - I always say I've got to go Sunday, got to go Sunday - and every Sunday something's popped up - well, this summer it was fishing - so ok - I can pray while I'm on the lake eh - sorry I'm not there God - don't have to be in his house as long as you're thinkin' - I feel more like a christian than a Catholic - I don't believe in all the Catholic rituals and so on and so forth. I don't think God's punishing me or anything like that - there's a spiritual something out there - what it is I'm not exactly sure - but ah I believe if you're basically good - good will come - some good will happen to you.

K: Do you think there's a reason for things that happen?

G: I think people just create them.

K: You can't fit this thing you're going through into some bigger pattern?

G: No. I think I just stumbled into it. I mean - because there's an earthquake in Armenia - I don't think God had a reason to cause an earthquake - it just happened. I don't think everything's destined to be. I think things happen because people create them to happen - good or bad - basically God said hey - there it is - do whatever you want with it. And it's up to you - you can make good or bad out of it. He doesn't say - you're going to be good and you're going to be bad or whatever. Everybody starts the same and everybody goes out the same. It's what's in between that counts. Whatever you make of what's in between - is going to happen.

K: What about the idea that there's not much accident about why people get together - what do you do with that - what could you and (______) be getting from each other.

G: Well - I think if we both concentrate our energies into a common goal - we could be awesome together.

K: What would that goal be for you?

G: Right now - it would be to just have a stable relationship - a normal relationship.

K: So the goal might change depending on what stage you were at?

G: Well - long-term, short-term, like I say, I'm not growing upward, everything is (parallel motion). I've got to get this settled before I can plan ahead and do other stuff. Every day when I look in the mirror when I shave I say you're getting older and older. That bothers me - I'm not where I thought I would be five years ago - or three years ago - I never thought I'd go through something like I'm going through. I've learned from it - I never thought this could become the problem - with the intensity. You read about it hear about it and think gee, that's too bad, that's awful. But you just don't realize until you're involved in it how awful it is. Just like reading - about drunk drivers and drunk driver killing people all the time, but until somebody in your own family is killed you just have absolutely no idea what it's like. It's the same thing.

K: Well, I guess the good news, in this case, is that there is healing.

G: I hope so - I wish I knew - If I could have a time - six months, eight months, two years - if I had a specific time - that I could deal with - Ok, great - I know for the next year and a half - six months - whatever - this is what I gotta do and I can see light at the end of it, but it could be anything.

APPENDIX 2

Letter to Research Participants

Dear Sir,

I am interested in gaining an understanding of the experience of partners of women dealing with a past experience of incest. The information I obtain will be used for my Master's thesis in counseling psychology. My interest in this particular topic stems from personal experience and from working with others who share the consequences of incest.

Those of us who are married or engaged in committed relationships have the challenge of including a partner in the healing process. There is very little research dealing with the experience of "partners". Most of the past research has dealt with the experience of the incest survivor. One possible result of your participation will be to let other partners know that they are not alone in their situation. Another result will be to share the story of your needs and your perspective and your feelings with incest survivors. Therapists who are interested in working with relationships that include a past experience of incest can possibly use your story to educate themselves and their clients.

The nature of this study then, will be simply to tell the story of what ***your*** lived experience as the partner of an incest survivor has been. It will not be necessary to examine the actual events of your spouse's past. Should you choose to participate, I will be interested in exploring the impact that her experiences and any of their consequences have had on you. This type of study is called phenomenological research, and involves both of us as co-researchers on an equal basis attempting to understand an experience. We are not trying to discover or prove anything in particular.

The process involves an initial, audio-taped interview with you, and another interview at a later date during which you have a chance to examine what I have written and correct any misrepresentations of your story. Everything you say will be confidential in that no one but you and I will know your identity. For purposes of the thesis, you may choose another name, and any identifying details will be disguised.

Thank you for being willing to share with me what I know is a very personal part of your life.

Yours very truly,
Kathryn Fearnley